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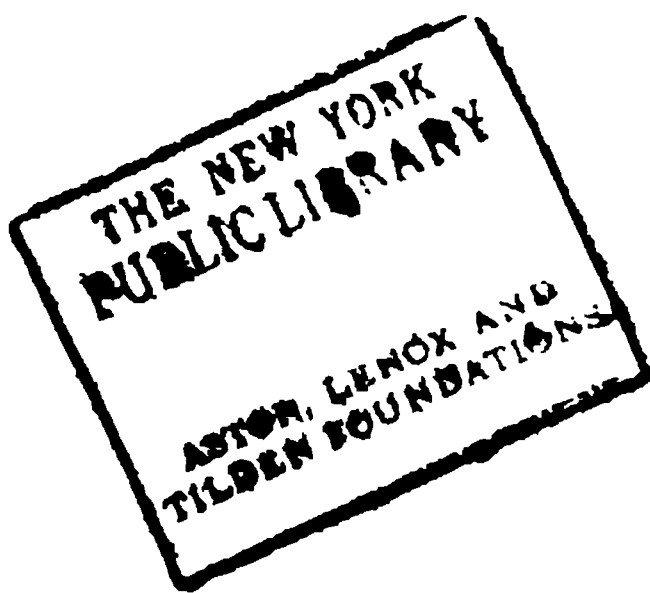
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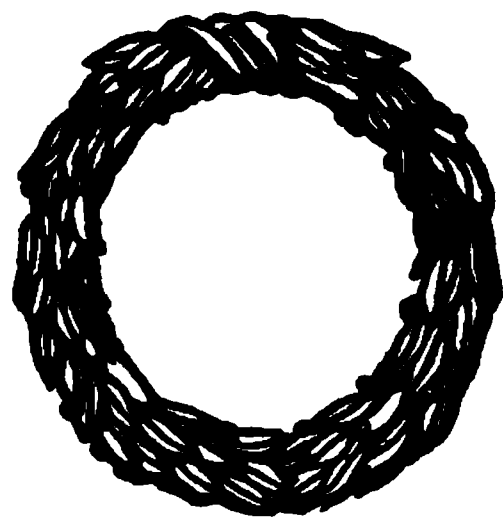


PALACE OF THE VESTAL VIRGINS AND IMPERIAL PALACES OF TIBERIUS AND CALIGULA
[RESTORED IN ROME BY VINCENZO BENVENUTI]

Not in RP
6/25/22 K.G.

THE HOUSE OF CAESAR

AND THE IMPERIAL DISEASE
BY SEYMOUR VAN SANTVOORD



PAFRAETS BOOK COMPANY
TROY NEW YORK MDCCCCII

11/5/22

11/5/22

A PART OF THE FORUM ROMANUM SHOWING THE TEMPLES OF VENUS AND ROME, OF THE VESTAL VIRGINS, OF JULIUS CÆSAR, OF CAÏTOR AND POLLUX, AND A CORNER OF THE BASILICA OF JULIA [RESTORED BY BECCHETTI]

PREFACE

Prefaces to books are usually of two sorts: explanatory and apologetic. For this reason, perhaps, they are tolerated as in some degree useful to the comparatively few who read them. If of the first-mentioned kind, it is possible to form some estimate as to whether the text has a message for the reader; while if the introduction is of the other variety, to the experienced gleaner, at least, it is ordinarily safe to conclude that the book ought not to have been written.

While perhaps not entirely justifiable, I have felt that there is at least excuse for the publication of this little compilation—than which it professes to be nothing more. While reading with my boys one of John Bonner's delightful books for children, I was impressed as I had never been by more pretentious Roman histories, with the almost certain incident to the imperial office of a death by violent means. Curiously tracing this so-called "Imperial Disease" to its origin, I finally discovered it, as it seemed to me, in the introduction among the Romans by the Empress Livia Augusta of the dreadful crime of domestic murder. And after descending again from Livia to Nero, and exploring the fate of all who bore the cognomen of Cæsar by the

PREFACE

aid of the clue thus discovered, the conclusion became irresistible that the violent death which awaited so large a proportion of the Roman Emperors is to be accounted for not alone by the license of the times, but in no small degree by the existence of a veritable disease having its origin in the house of Cæsar itself.

Although extremely anxious not to be classed among those who deliberately cater to the taste for all monstrous infractions of both divine and natural laws, I have assumed the risk which at first sight might not unnaturally attach to the narration of a series of almost uninterrupted crimes, confident that in the end the motive of this sketch will not be misjudged. And while distinctly disavowing the intent of pointing a moral, at once so inexcusable and dangerous in a mere gathering of facts, I have nevertheless felt that what De Quincey calls the "striking and truly scenical catastrophe of retribution which overtook the long evolution of insane atrocities perpetrated by the Cæsars," furnishes a lesson so impressive as to justify in some measure at least even what may be considered a monotonous relation of wickedness and outrage.

I have meant this to be an explanation. If between the lines an apology is found, whosoever discovers it would wisely apply the rule suggested in the introductory paragraph.

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As these pages have not been written for the learned, I have not cited authorities. But my facts have been gathered from the usual sources,—Tacitus, Dion Cassius, Suetonius, Pliny, and Plutarch among the fathers; besides making use of Crévier, Merivale, Duruy, Gibbon, and the many writers quoted by them respectively. Everything stated as fact has been founded upon the best obtainable authority, which after careful comparison has seemed to me under all the circumstances sufficient; and where a particular incident appears to be in doubt, I have frankly so stated.

The valuable and interesting “Tragedy of the Cæsars” by S. Baring-Gould was not brought to my attention until the first eleven chapters of this volume were completed. The author’s conclusions are in many respects so diametrically opposed to my own and to what has hitherto been so almost universally accepted as unquestionable fact, that both in a spirit of fairness and with an anxious regard for historic truth, whatever idols must be destroyed, or new altars erected, before completing my work the entire subject was carefully reconsidered in the light of Mr. Baring-Gould’s argument. It need only be said that I have found no reason to recast any of my conclusions—many of which, on the contrary, have been actually strengthened after remaining unconvinced by what must be considered the strongest possible presentation of the other side. My twelfth chapter was

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accordingly framed upon the lines originally drawn; in the final note to which chapter will be found a brief reference to Mr. Baring-Gould's estimate of Livia, Tiberius, Octavia Minor, and the two Agrippinas.

I am sure that every one—even including the publishers—will grant me a few lines in closing, gratefully to acknowledge my dear mother's kindness in procuring many of the photographs from which the accompanying illustrations have been made. Without the assistance which her familiarity with the subject and close acquaintance with the museums consequent upon a long residence in Italy enabled her to render in the selection of those busts and statues of which photographs would be desirable, the most interesting and attractive features of this book would have been wanting. And among the imperishable memories which lighten the soberer vistas of the past, are those of the happy days when, in supplementing her earlier work, together we sallied forth in the Eternal City: and by pleading, cajolery, and insistence—with here and there, it must be confessed, a somewhat lavish use of lire—secured the necessary “per-messo” for our lively little photographic “Tito” to make a negative of some rare bust which presumably had never before faced the camera. “Instant dismissal would be mine, Signore Americano, if it came to his Holiness's ears that this had been permitted,” said the smiling official as he slyly

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pocketed the gold piece (a rara avis indeed in that land of dirty paper) which was the price of the coveted photograph of Agrippina Major secured from the Chiaramonti in Holy Lent itself!

S. V. S.

November, 1901

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CALIGULA	37	GETA	211
CLAUDIUS	41	CARACALLA	211
NERO	54	MACRINUS	217
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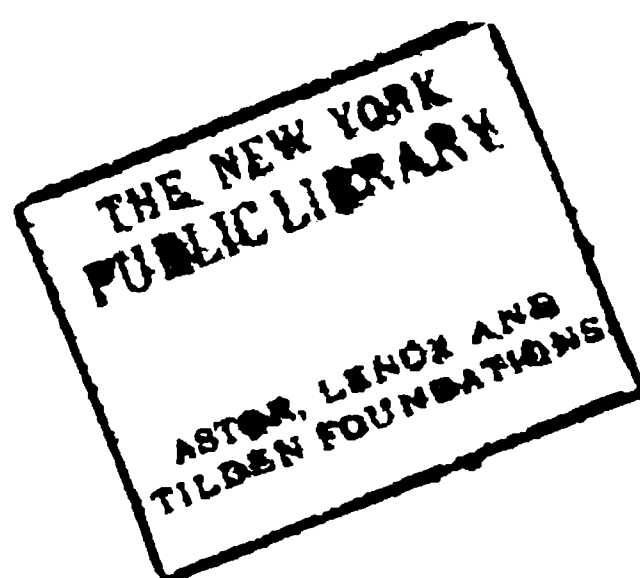
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PART I
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR





A PART OF THE FORUM ROMANUM SHOWING THE ROSTRA AND THE ARCH OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS. DRAWING BY MISS MARY BETHAM, ENGRAVED BY MISS MARY BETHAM. FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, ROME.]

THE BEGINNING OF SPLENDOR

CHAPTER I

JULIUS CÆSAR

ON the fifteenth of March in the year 44 B. C., Caius Julius Cæsar, the greatest man in ancient Rome, the grandest figure of sovereignty in all the ancient world, was stabbed to death in the Roman Senate. It was a premeditated assassination. Dissuaded from attending the session by the tender entreaties of his wife Calpurnia, he had sent word that he would not come. But the conspirators despatched a trusted friend to urge his attendance, and overcoming his presentiments he yielded and went to his fate. On the way to the senate-house some one thrust into his hand a scroll containing the names of the conspirators and an account of their wicked designs. The fate of the Republic hung upon his opening it. *He did not open it.*

Before the charge of the cavalry at Waterloo, Napoleon is said to have asked a question of the guide Lacoste—presumably whether there was any obstacle. The fate of the nineteenth century hung upon the shake of a peasant's head. But, says Hugo, "Was it possible for Napoleon to win the battle? We answer in the negative. Why? On account of Wellington or Blücher? No; on account of God." Napoleon had begun to disturb the equilibrium of the universe; nature and God decreed that he must be displaced. And so when Cæsar, on his way to death, received from the unknown a written disclosure of the conspiracy against his life, but which he carelessly assumed to

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

be an ordinary petition, the fate of many centuries hung upon a thread—and the thread was not broken. But could the Empire have been forestalled? We answer no; God's law of evolution decreed otherwise. Says Froude, "As Cæsar had lived to reconstruct the Roman world, so his death was necessary to finish the work." For in any event, the Republic was doomed. Cæsar, as king in name, would have put an end to that. And as the writer last quoted explains so convincingly, the Empire of the Cæsars was exactly the kingdom demanded by the new life which was dawning for mankind; "a kingdom where peaceful men could work, think, and speak as they pleased," and travel freely where life and property were for the most part protected and fanatics prevented from tearing each other to pieces on account of religious opinions.

Shall we say, then, that the slayers of Cæsar were indeed world patriots? And that what Goethe has declared to have been the most senseless deed that was ever done, was really founded in the necessities of civilization's progress?

The family of Cæsar claimed to be of immortal descent, tracing its pedigree back to a son of Æneas, who after the fall of Troy had found a resting-place along the sunny shores of western Italy. During a funeral oration which he pronounced from the rostra, in praise of his aunt Julia (the wife of Marius), Caius Julius, who was then quæstor, said: "My aunt Julia derived her descent by her mother from a race of Kings, and by her father from the Immortal Gods. For the Marcii Reges, her mother's family, deduce their pedigree from Ancus Marcius, and the Julii, her father's, from Venus; of which stock we are a branch. We therefore unite in our descent the sacred majesty of Kings, the chiefest among men, and the divine majesty of Gods, to whom Kings themselves are subject."

JULIUS CÆSAR

Æneas was the son of Anchises and Venus, and it was from his son Ascanius, otherwise called Iulus, or *Julus*, that the Gens Julia, of which the Cæsars were a branch, was descended. Ancus Marcius was the fourth King of Rome, and according to the old legends he befriended the people against the nobles, for which reason his name was held in especial reverence.

The etymology of the name Cæsar is unsettled. It has been variously derived from the color of the eyes prevailing in the family (dark gray and piercing, like an eagle's); from an exploit during an African hunt, there being a Moorish word *Cæsar* meaning elephant, and from the fact that the first celebrated member of the family came into the world by the aid of the surgeon's knife. But whatever the original meaning of the word, from the hour when Cassius's dagger put an end to the life work of the great Cæsar, the name has remained among mankind as the title of sovereignty—august, indeed, as the first Emperor so pompously elected to be called.

Froude says that the pedigree of the great Cæsar goes no further than his grandfather Caius Julius, who about the middle of the second century before Christ married Marcia, descended from one of the early kings as above stated. Their three children were Caius Julius, Sextus Julius, and Julia. The daughter married Caius Marius, afterwards the boast of democracy, and whose name remains a synonym for hardy, incorruptible Roman virtue. Their son, the younger Marius, who after the death of his father shared with Cinna the chief power of Rome, was in his youth one of the most intimate friends of his cousin, Caius Julius, the future dictator.

The elder son of Caius Julius and Marcia married Aurelia, allied to the great consular family of Cotta. Of this

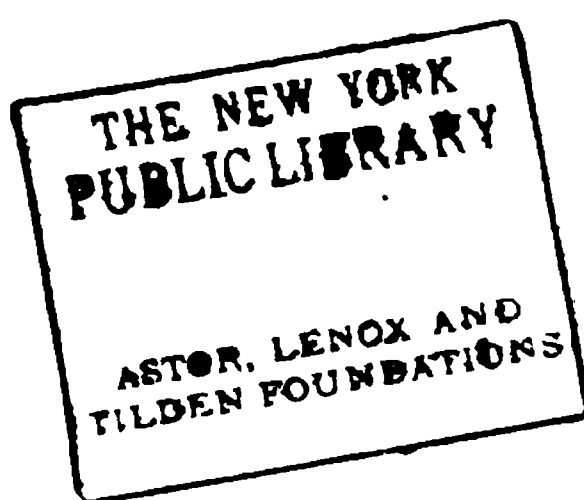
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

union was born, in the year 100 B. C. (or 102 B. C., as fixed by Mommsen and perhaps more generally accepted by scholars), on the twelfth day of the month which thereafter took its name from him, *Julius Cæsar*, afterwards known to all the world as Cæsar the Great. From the Roman people he ultimately received the appellation *Julius Cæsar Divus*—the Divine. It was from the same motive that an apotheosis had been conferred upon Romulus, namely, to obviate the people's suspicion that he was murdered by a conspiracy of the patrician order.

According to Pliny, his father, who had been prætor, died suddenly at Pisa, in the year 670 A. U. C. (about 84 B. C.). Cæsar was then a youth of sixteen or eighteen. Although little is known of his mother Aurelia, she was plainly a woman of character. Plutarch says that she had great discretion, and it is certain that between mother and son a passionate attachment always existed. On the morning of the election when Cæsar was candidate for the office of Pontifex Maximus, which was really the beginning of his great career, his mother attended him to the door with tears in her eyes, while he said as she embraced him, "My dear mother, you will see me this day chief pontiff, or I shall never return." It seems to have been her life task to watch over his best interests, and she lived to share in the triumph of his great exploits in Gaul. She died in the year 54 B. C.

While a mere boy Cæsar had been betrothed to Cossutia, a member of a very wealthy family, but only of the equestrian order. His views, however, were more ambitious and after his father's death he repudiated the engagement and married Cornelia, daughter of Cinna, who had been four times consul. At the time of this marriage he seems to have been nineteen years old. There is no more striking

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evidence of his character than his spirited refusal to divorce Cornelia, at the command of the terrible Sylla. His friend, the great Pompey, had yielded to a similar command and given up his wife to marry the tyrant's step-daughter Æmilia, who was compelled to put away her own husband for that purpose. But with Cæsar, coaxing, blandishments, and threats were alike useless. The love of his wife and child and the maintenance of his independence and self-respect were more to him than life. Sylla stripped him of his sacerdotal office, confiscated his patrimonial estates and his wife's dowry, and actually set a price upon his head. Suetonius says that his life was finally spared through the intercession of powerful friends and that in granting their request Sylla declared: "This man for whose safety you are so extremely anxious will some day or other be the ruin of the party of nobles in defence of which you are leagued with me; for in this one Cæsar you will find many a Marius." It was a prophetic utterance.

One daughter, Julia, was born of this marriage. Julia is said to have been gifted with every charm, and at the age of twenty-two she cemented the friendship of her father and the great Pompey by marrying the latter. She won her husband's passionate affection, and her early death in the year 54 B. C. was bitterly and universally lamented. A child which she had borne to Pompey had previously died.

After the death of Cornelia, Cæsar married Pompeia, daughter of Quintus Pompeius and granddaughter of Lucius Sylla. He afterwards divorced her upon suspicion of her unfaithfulness; although there was no evidence other than the attempt of a young quæstor named Clodius to enter Cæsar's house in disguise during the celebration of

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a religious festival. But "Cæsar's wife ought not to be even so much as suspected," he is reported to have said, although the saying is perhaps, like so many others, apocryphal.

Cæsar's third wife was Calpurnia, the daughter of Lucius Piso, who succeeded Cæsar as consul. Calpurnia survived him. No children were born of this or of Cæsar's second marriage. Cæsario, his reputed child by Cleopatra, was put to death by Augustus, after the final defeat of Antony.¹

Cæsar was assassinated in the year 44 B. C. At the time of his death he had held every office of importance in the Roman State and was an absolute monarch in everything but the title. In the name of Democracy and under cover of the Marian principles he had overthrown the Republic and reduced the Senate to a mere machine for registering his decrees. Whether he really expected or even desired to become king *eo nomine* may be questioned. But he prepared the way for Empire, and he alone. He was the founder of the house of Cæsar; and without the house of Cæsar there would have been no Roman Empire. By the fiction of adoption, the glory of the great Cæsar passed on to the young Augustus and in itself played no unimportant part in building up the imperialistic idea.

Twenty years after the daggers of Cassius and Brutus had left the world without a master, Augustus succeeded in erecting the framework of an Empire upon the foundation which his great kinsman had built so enduringly. In ex-

¹ Cleopatra, in anticipation of Antony's defeat, had sent Cæsario with a large sum of money through Ethiopia into India. Plutarch says that the young man's tutor urged him to turn back, falsely persuading him that Augustus would make him King of Egypt. While the Emperor was deliberating how to dispose of him some one observed that there ought not by any means to be too many Cæsars; whereupon Cæsario was put to death.

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tent, in wealth, in variety, and in everything that makes up earthly power and dignity it became the most magnificent governmental creation that ever had existed. Perhaps no man but Alexander, and possibly Napoleon, has ever dreamed of a greater. During the first two centuries it waxed and maintained its supremacy; during the three following it waned, and finally in the year 476 A. D., five hundred and twenty years after its great founder perished, it melted away into barbarous oblivion.

During the five hundred years which elapsed between what may be called the actual establishment of the Empire by Augustus (about 24 B. C.) and the termination of the Empire by the deposition of Romulus Augustus, 476 A. D., we may count exactly one hundred emperors. Not all of them indeed are classed as such by the historians. For some, while claiming the office and title for themselves, or having the claim made for them by certain provinces, or factions of the State or army, did not maintain themselves sufficiently long to acquire a permanent place in the imperial roll. So that of the one hundred so-called emperors, perhaps twenty or twenty-five may be considered as spurious. But for the practical purposes of life and death it made no difference whether the claim to the title were genuine or false. The most shadowy as well as the best-established claim was alike sufficient to expose its possessor to the "Imperial disease"; and of these one hundred so-called emperors of the mightiest and most wonderful of human governments, only nineteen are known to have died a natural death. Of the remaining eighty-one, seven were killed in battle, three committed suicide, sixty-four were murdered, while the cause of death of seven is unknown. That is to say, during the five centuries of the Roman Empire's existence, the average reign of its rulers

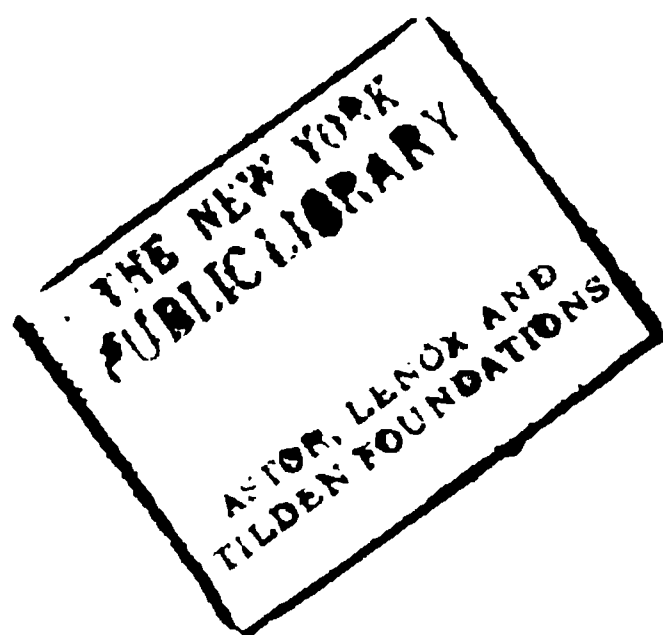
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was *five* years; while four out of five of those rulers came to a violent end.

The sickening story began with the death of the great Julius. Scarcely one of the murderers, and as well those who participated in it, died from natural causes. All were condemned by the Senate; some were drowned and others killed in battle, while Brutus and Cassius destroyed themselves with the same poniards with which they had killed Cæsar. It might be said that Cæsar's blood was well avenged; but this proved to be only the baptismal sprinkling of a long *régime* of the most horrible family and State murders contained in the annals of a civilized society. While it is not a pleasant page to scan, there is many a lesson to be read between the lines, not the least important of which is the undoubted fact that from the horrible practice of domestic murder which was introduced among the Romans by the Cæsars, sprang no inconsiderable portion of that spirit of lawlessness, soon acquired by the people after example set by the nobles, which was one of the chief causes of the ruin of Rome. So that it may not be unprofitable to briefly trace the rise of what may well be termed the "Imperial disease" and then notice still more briefly its fatal effects upon the long list of Roman Emperors.

Apart from numerous coins, a few gems, and the various busts of which the greater number are of doubtful value, the author of the "Lives" remains our only source of information as to the personal appearance of the early Cæsars. But however untrustworthy Suetonius may be in other respects, it is probable that his personal descriptions are in the main reliable; founded, as they undoubtedly were, upon both popular tradition and the unquestionably genuine busts and statues which must have been extant

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at the time he wrote. And while evidence of this sort must necessarily be open to question, it is convincing enough to at least gratify that invariable curiosity as to the personal appearance and characteristics of the great figures in history. Too often the result is disappointing; but in the case of Cæsar the commonly accepted picture is that of a man whose bodily presence and personal attributes are entirely proportioned to the greatness of his intellect, the intensity of his moral force, and the splendor of his fame.

Measured by the Italian standard of height, which is supposed to have been then, as it still is, lower than that of the more hardy and vigorous northern races, the founder of the house of Cæsar was tall and of athletic proportions. With well-made limbs, strongly knit frame, and an iron constitution, he was capable of unremitting activity and of enduring the greatest fatigue and hardships. His complexion is said to have been fair, his eyes dark and piercing, his lips thin and firmly pressed together, his face rather full and strongly marked by the prominent nose which is so rarely absent in the portraits of really great men. His large and well-formed head, its dome accentuated by the prominent temples and the absence of hair from the sharply rising forehead, was set upon a firm and sinewy neck, the latter in itself so significant of constitutional vigor. The contour of the well-known bust in the British Museum is almost flawless; and combined with the keen look, not wanting, however, in its expression of massive gravity, and the strong lines which mark so plainly a powerful self-poise and an unconquerable will, satisfies our conception of one of the greatest of men, whether or not the marble be genuine.

His personal habits—with one exception—are univer-

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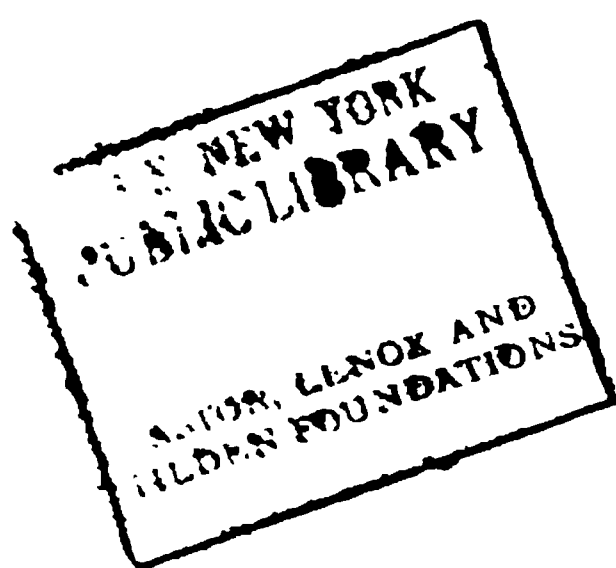
sally conceded to have been of that sort which indicates a high measure of refinement, self-respect, and appreciation of the dignity of human nature. Scrupulously clean and neat, and all through life particularly attentive to his personal appearance, abstemious at table—rarely or never touching wine—with temper always under absolute control and exhibiting an unfailing patience and courtesy, he considered sobriety, both bodily and mental, not only among the highest qualities, but as a veritable duty of citizenship. He excelled in all manly exercises, being noted especially, however, for his horsemanship and his skill with the sword.

The charge of immorality under which the first Cæsar suffers equally with his five successors, although fiercely disputed, has never been disproved. Even Froude, who contends most strenuously against the severe accusations of certain early writers, concedes it to be in the highest degree improbable that Cæsar's morality was superior to that of the average of his contemporaries. Beyond this point, however, a sober weighing of the facts does not compel us to go. Froude's arguments are entirely convincing that the accusations of Cicero, Catullus, and Licinius, grossly repeated by Suetonius (who is said by some one to have displayed in his writings all the delight in a coarse sensuality which those of whom he wrote manifested in their lives), must have been slanders. And unless forced to do so, by unquestioned historic truth, we are not inclined to enlarge, beyond its well-defined limits, this one notable weakness of "the foremost man of all this world."¹

While not entirely free from the superstition of his times, Cæsar was too genuinely great to be in any degree moved by it. The omens were never so unpromising as to deter

¹ *Julius Cæsar*, Act iv. Sc. 3.

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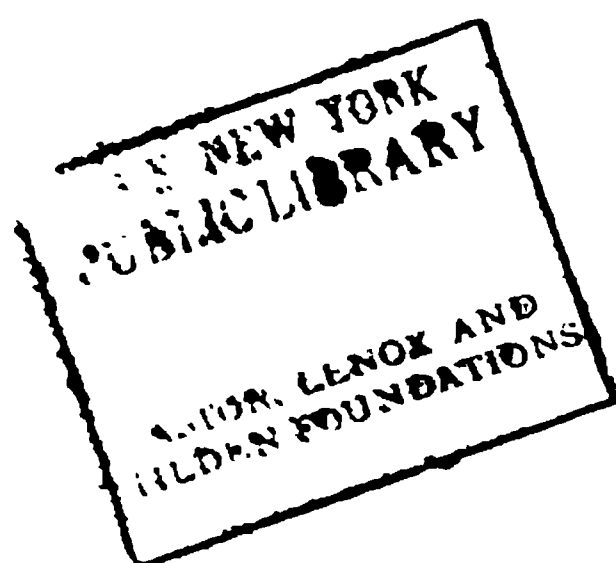


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him from a projected enterprise. Happening to stumble while stepping ashore in the African expedition, it is said that instead of yielding to what was considered a dark omen he gave a lucky turn to it by exclaiming, "I hold thee fast, Africa!" Whether founded upon fact, or only traditional, the story is finely illustrative both of his tenacity of purpose and that abiding confidence in himself and his high destiny, which is one of the first attributes of an elevated soul. These characteristics, united with the most conspicuous courage and daring, and a talent for war which has never been equalled and will probably never be surpassed, rendered him well-nigh invulnerable in those memorable campaigns which advanced the glory of the Roman arms to a position undreamed of by the most ardent lover of the Republic.

His career furnishes perhaps the only example of a great military leader who never failed to achieve success when himself in command. And even in the three or four instances where his lieutenants met defeat, his genius was sufficient to retrieve the disaster, which in the end was converted into an overwhelming victory.

Cæsar possessed all the innate kindliness, courtesy, lack of resentment, and magnanimity which under the circumstances of his position none but a supremely great man could have displayed in the Roman world of that day. The story of his clemency and generosity after the civil war is like a refreshing breeze out of the tropics, after reading similar pages of contemporaneous history. With less dignity of character and a smaller measure of that calm confidence in the genius of his fortunes and the stability of his relation to events, his remarkable display of moderation towards the vanquished party would never have occurred, and his senseless murder would not have awakened



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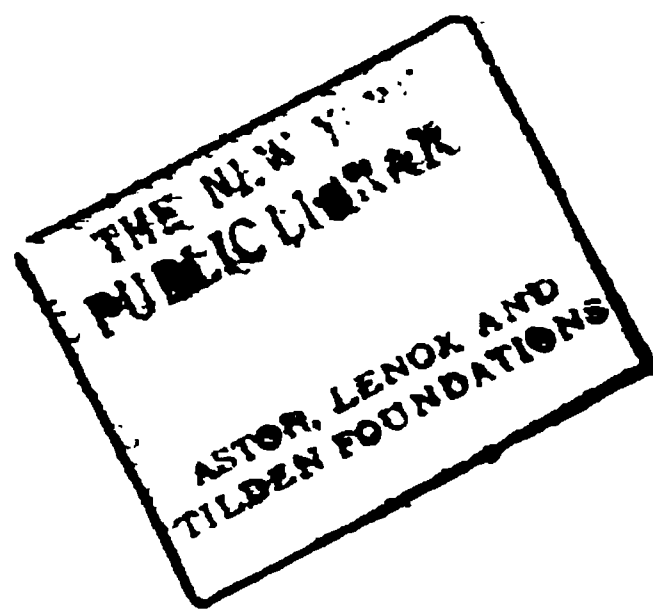
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increased to about one million sterling. It is also true that this immense indebtedness was discharged by moneys collected by the conqueror during the Spanish war. And historians have not scrupled to affirm that his campaigns were prosecuted and even the civil war begun with the sole view of meeting his vast pecuniary embarrassments. But as De Quincey has pointed out, rather than being the original ground of his quest for power and revolutionary projects, Cæsar's debts were the product of his ambition and contracted merely in the service of his political intrigues to establish a powerful support in the State for his party and himself. He *paid them to the last denarius*—that important fact is rarely mentioned by the critics; and that the spoils of war supplied the means of so doing is simply one of the invariably bitter incidents of conquest either in barbaric or so-called Christian warfare.

As regards his moral character, a more serious question is presented from the standpoint of Christianity and modern ethics in the fact of the great human misery entailed by his campaigns and the civil wars which finally established his supremacy. The destruction of over a million souls, and the enforced slavery of additional thousands, will always be considered by many minds an unanswerable accusation. And whatever arguments in the line of necessity, human progress, and survival—laws superior to Cæsar, and of which he was but the instrument—may be urged against this enormous destruction of human life, the sale into slavery of prisoners taken in battle constitutes an undoubted stain upon Cæsar's moral character, and one which modern ideas can never tolerate. Froude declares that the blot was not personally upon Cæsar, but upon the age in which he lived, urging that "the great Pomponius Atticus was himself a dealer in human chattels." But it is Cæsar,

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not Atticus, who is at the bar; and while victors and vanquished alike accepted it as a law of the times that prisoners of war should be sold into slavery, the great Dictator was in most ways so preëminently superior to the character of the age in which he lived, his hatred of injustice was so frequently and passionately manifested, and the generosity and mercy which he ordinarily displayed were of a degree which, in the eyes of the Roman world at least, implied such unusual magnanimity,¹ that it is difficult to understand why he himself should not have appreciated the gravity of the offence, for which, therefore, it must be admitted there was the less excuse.

As a final answer to Cæsar's claim for our regard and admiration, his enemies and detractors have urged his love of power. Even those who admit his vast superiority and general moral excellence are frightened by this bugaboo of "lust for power." "If he had but refused the dictatorship," says one, "he would have been worthy to stand by the side of Washington, above the splendid army of heroes who have ennobled the world." "If he had not indulged so unseasonably and greedily in the honors which were heaped upon him," says another, "he would be entitled to more of our sympathy in his untimely end." The refusal of Washington to accept that which he had led the fight to escape, entitles and will preserve to him the undying respect and admiration of all friends of liberty who love a high demeanor as well as courage and success.

¹ The popular estimate of Cæsar was strikingly displayed in the immense and unquestionably spontaneous demonstration of sorrow at his funeral. Never before, we are told, had such a multitude assembled for a similar purpose, including a great number of foreigners, especially Jews, who for several nights frequented the spot where the body was burnt. The pages of Josephus contain repeated testimony of the benefits conferred on his countrymen by the first Cæsar. *Antiq.* xiv. 14, 15, 16.

CHAPTER II

CÆSAR AUGUSTUS, THE FIRST EMPEROR

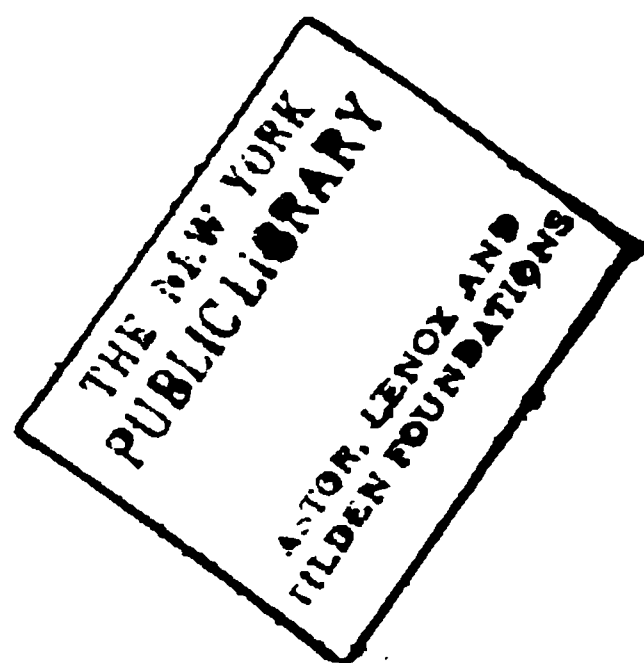
FROM 24 B. C. TO 14 A. D.

AFTER the death of Cæsar's daughter Julia, whose only child had previously died, he adopted as his son and afterwards by will named as his chief heir his grand-nephew Caius Octavius, who thereupon assumed the name of Caius Cæsar. Octavius received three-fourths of his great-uncle's estate, while his cousins Lucius Pinarius and Quintus Pedius had the remaining one-fourth. Although but seventeen years of age at the time of Cæsar's death, he had already given evidence of so much shrewdness, energy, and ability as to endear himself to his great relative, who never failed to appreciate such indications of character.

Caius Octavius, or Caius Cæsar; Cæsar Augustus, or Augustus, as he was finally called, was born in the year 61 B. C., upon the ninth of the Calends of October (September twenty-third). His father, Caius Octavius, was of an old patrician family of the first distinction. The Octavii, however, had divided into two branches, of which one remained patrician, its members holding uninterruptedly the highest offices in the State, while the other, from which Augustus was descended, was of the equestrian order and so remained until the father of Augustus became prætor. He died as he was on the point of declaring his candidacy for the consulship.

Caius Octavius was twice married; his first wife being Ancharia, by whom he had a daughter, the elder Octavia, who, according to Plutarch, afterwards became the wife

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of Mark Antony. But it seems evident that this was an error on the part of the great biographer and that the wife of Antony was the *younger* Octavia, the own sister of Augustus, and daughter of Caius Octavius by his second wife Atia, who was the daughter of Marcus Atius Balbus and Julia, sister of the great Cæsar. Balbus on his mother's side was nearly related to Pompey the Great, while his father was of a distinguished family, many of whom had been senators. Augustus's claims of a lofty descent, however, were treated with contempt by many of his high-born contemporaries, including his sister's husband, Mark Antony.

However this may be, he was a *Cæsar*, and the qualities which had attracted his uncle's attention enabled him to make good his inheritance from the outset and finally to grasp securely the highest measure of power which had ever been maintained in the Roman world.

The foundation was laid in wickedness almost beyond conception. Although Augustus, through his uncle's adoption, became his natural successor, there were two rival claimants in the persons of Mark Antony and Lepidus, Cæsar's master of the horse, each of whom had a powerful army behind him. The crafty Augustus, foreseeing that time alone was all that he needed to secure the prize, proposed that the three should make a league and rule Rome together. In so doing he may have urged as a precedent the compact between his great-uncle, Cneius Pompey, and Crassus, which was the outcome of the celebrated conference at Lucca, whereby Cicero's attack upon the triumvirate was foiled, and Cæsar, Crassus, and Pompey were granted a new term of five years' government in Gaul, Spain, and Syria, respectively. But in that case the power was secured constitutionally,—that is, by bills brought be-

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by adoption, became Cæsar in fact and Roman republicanism and Roman democracy had passed away forever. The last of the triumvirs became consul, tribune, censor, prætor, and high priest (Lepidus having died) all at once, and having safeguarded his now absolute power by establishing a prætorian guard, which was the final ruin of free Rome, received from the people a proposition that he be made dictator for life. Declining this, he was offered the name of Romulus, which he also refused, selecting instead that of *Augustus*, an epithet which was ordinarily applied to places set apart for religious purposes and containing anything consecrated by augury, and which was assumed by the new sovereign as signifying that a more than human sacredness and majesty existed in his person.

And thus, in about the year 24 B. C., the spirit of freedom in Rome was finally quenched and the Empire established, with Augustus its first Emperor. The Roman people were worn out with the murder, rapine, and wars of the past few generations. They yielded to their fate. The imperialistic idea became firmly rooted. The house of Cæsar was apparently founded on a rock. But, as we have seen, not only its opportunity came in through a shameless act of murder, but its subsequent establishment was also based upon an appalling homicide. It remained for a woman to introduce a more hideous phase of the same crime, as the direct consequence of which the great house of Cæsar was absolutely blotted out and a long line of succeeding emperors likewise disappeared through a series of crimes so awful and abominations so dreadful as almost to justify the thought that Rome had been abandoned by God.

The first Emperor is commonly supposed to have been handsome and graceful in person, although it is some-

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times stated that he was lame; the assertion perhaps being founded on a remark of Suetonius that Augustus had a weakness in his left hip and thigh. His eyes were bright and piercing, and it is said that few persons could long sustain his steady gaze; which the gratified Emperor was pleased to consider an attribute of divinity. He had a finely shaped, well-poised head, covered with fair, curling hair; his features were regular, with aquiline nose and small ears, while the prevailing expression of his countenance was calm and serene. But he was of a weak constitution, and subject to frequent attacks of severe illness; so that it was only by excessive precautions that he maintained a state of health sufficient to enable the constant attention which he ambitiously devoted to his imperial office.

He conducted in person only two foreign wars; and although for the energy displayed in one of the campaigns of his great relative he gained the latter's approbation, in the main he was utterly destitute of military talents, and wisely left to his lieutenants the conduct of his wars. At the close of the civil strife, in which, as his personal fortunes were at stake, he necessarily participated, he finally abandoned riding and exercises at arms, and from that time, in deference to his delicate health, walking and riding in his litter constituted his only exercise.

Notwithstanding the glamour which has enveloped his personal history and character, by reason both of the brilliancy of his era and the undoubted moderation, temperance, and wisdom which he displayed during the last forty years of his life, it is undeniable that Augustus was by nature selfish, cowardly, and cruel, if not actually vicious. The period from the signing of the infamous Bologna compact to the destruction of the unfortunate Antony and his beautiful Egyptian consort, abounds in instances of the

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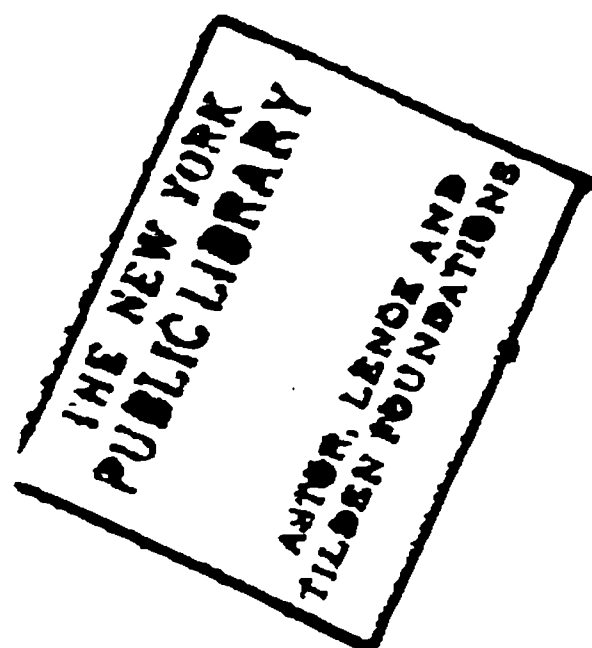
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cluding Italy and Rome itself: the power of the proconsuls being entirely absolute under the old constitutions. And when finally, upon the death of his old associate, the triumvir Lepidus,¹ Augustus was made Pontifex Maximus, an office of high importance from the sanctity attaching to it and the influence it gave him over the entire religious system, by the mere union of the ordinary executive powers, he arrived at the full measure of imperial sovereignty.

While posterity has been divided in its judgment of Augustus, the weight of opinion seems to be that the Emperor passed judgment upon himself in the famous death-bed remark to his friends: "Have I acted well my part? Then applaud me." He certainly either proved himself an accomplished actor, or else his life presents a remarkable instance of the obliteration of native evil instincts, by the sheer force of the responsibility and duty attaching to an elevated public office. The evil deeds which blackened the first thirty-five years of his life can never be erased, nor can they be reconciled with De Quincey's reasoning that "during the forty-two years of his prosperity and his triumph, being above fear, he showed *the natural lenity of his temper*." It is next to impossible for a man to attain the age of thirty-five and not make a display of his real character. In the early life of Augustus leniency figures only reflexively in connection with the crimes of himself and his associates, while his cruelties were by the brilliant English essayist himself confessed to be "equal in atrocity to any which are recorded." The true explanation of the striking change of character which marked the final accession to power of the Emperor Augustus is that advanced by Dr. Schmitz:

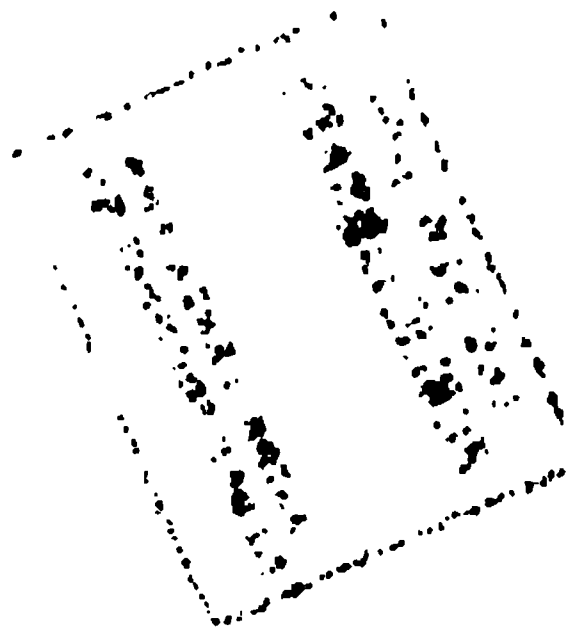
¹ This occurred in the year 12 B. C. For Lepidus, see *ante*, page 21.

LIVIA



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"That his own fears compelled him to strive after the affection of the people; and supported by his friends he learned to appear good even when he was differently inclined." But as the same writer has suggested, even assuming that none of his actions proceeded from a noble soul, and if all were merely a series of hypocrisies, it cannot be denied that what he actually did, under whatsoever guise accomplished, was the source of incalculable blessing and advantage to Rome and the world. All civilization owes a benediction to the man who established a form of government which has played so mighty a part in the world's progress; and for the moment forgetting the possible motives which prompted him, and remembering only his connection with one of the most remarkable periods in the history of man, we impulsively comply with his last imperial command and applaud him.



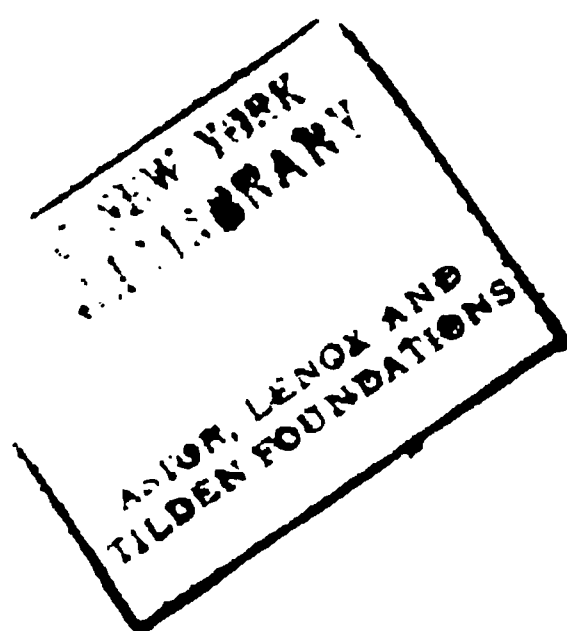
CHAPTER III

THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS

FOLLOWING an established custom, Caius Octavius had contracted the young Octavius at a tender age to a daughter of Publius Servilius Isauricus. But when the Bologna compact was made, the army desired that the confederacy should be confirmed by a matrimonial alliance of some sort and the most convenient and promising seemed to be a marriage between Augustus and Claudia, the daughter of Antony's wife Fulvia by her former husband, Publius Claudius. Claudia was at the time scarcely at the threshold of girlhood, and soon afterwards, as the result of a quarrel with his mother-in-law, Augustus divorced her. He next married Scribonia, the daughter of L. Scribonius Libo, and whose sister was the wife of Sextus Pompeius. Scribonia had been already twice married to men of consular rank, one of whom was Scipio, the father of Cornelia, whose death is lamented by Propertius. By Scribonia he had a daughter Julia, his only child.

After the birth of Julia, being as he declared tired to death by the ill-nature and perversity of Scribonia, Augustus divorced her and immediately thereafter married Livia Drusilla, who was at the time the wife of Tiberius Nero. Each of his previous marriages had been made purely from motives of personal interest: the first to seal the confederacy of the triumvirs; the second with a view of preventing a union against him of Sextus Pompey and Antony after the siege of Perusia. Into his third marriage, however, he was hurried by his passion for another man's wife, and judging from its results and the long train of

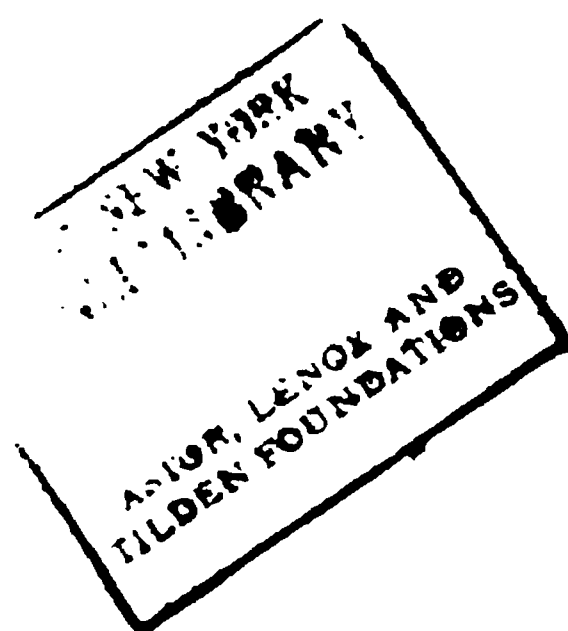
JULIA DAUGHTER OF AUGUSTUS



THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS

crime and infamy which it entailed upon the house of Cæsar and the race of emperors, never was there a wicked passion which ought so surely to have been strangled in its inception.

Livia Drusilla was the daughter of Livius Drusus Claudianus, a member of the Claudian family, who took his name from the house of Livius, into which he had been adopted. He had fought at the battle of Philippi on the side of liberty; and seeing the day lost, there had died by his own hand. Livia married Tiberius Claudius Nero, also of the Claudian house, who espoused the cause of Antony, and Augustus perhaps saw her first when she was fleeing from the danger which threatened her husband during the Perusian war, or possibly a little later, at the wedding of Antony and Octavia. Augustus was only twenty-five or twenty-six years of age at the time. The personal and political considerations for his alliance with the family of Pompey were no longer of force, and unable to control his passion for Livia, he divorced Scribonia on the very day of his daughter Julia's birth, and with the approbation of the augurs, which he had no difficulty in obtaining, celebrated his third marriage. While it is not certain that this was done with Livia's own inclination—the actual wishes of her husband, of course, were not consulted, although his formal consent seems to have been obtained—subsequent events would indicate that she was easily reconciled to her lot. At the time of her marriage to Augustus she was the mother of one son, Tiberius, and three months afterwards was born her second son, Drusus, of whom Tiberius Nero was also the father. Although ardently desired by both parties, no children resulted from her marriage with Augustus, and when it became apparent that her predominant ambition of giving



THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS

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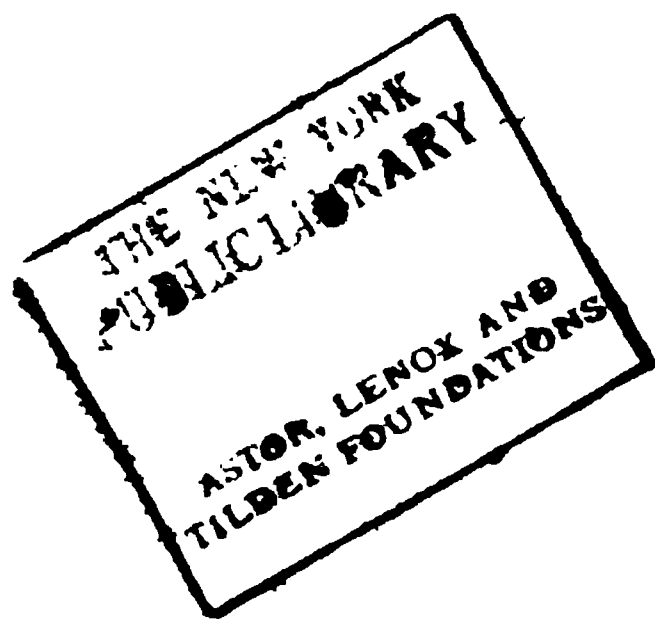
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

porting his domination and providing a fitting consort for his daughter, Augustus raised to the dignity of pontiff and curule ædile Claudius Marcellus, the son of his sister, the younger Octavia. Marcellus was a mere youth at the time, but upon the completion of his minority his marriage with Julia was celebrated. This Marcellus was the one celebrated in the beautiful lines of the sixth *Æneid*, where he is introduced into the vision of Roman grandeurs yet unborn which were revealed to *Æneas* in the shades; for which Virgil received an immense reward from Octavia.

Marcellus died soon after his marriage, and it seems probable that the wicked arts of Livia were first exercised in connection with his death. For while history is not positive on this point, the manifest determination of the Empress to secure the succession for her own son, her subsequent acts in this connection and the "secret apprehensions" of the people referred to by Tacitus in speaking of "Marcellus, who was snatched in his youth from the ardent affections of the populace," coupled with the premature death of a youth theretofore in perfect health, have been sufficient to convince more than one modern historian that he was poisoned by his mother-in-law.

Upon the death of Marcellus, Augustus selected for the second husband of his daughter his oldest friend and most useful adherent, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. At the time of this marriage there existed what in these days would be considered a serious obstacle to its consummation, in the fact that Agrippa was already married—his wife being one of the two sisters of the deceased Marcellus. But a Cæsar did not mind such a little thing. Plutarch says that Octavia herself, who was undoubtedly a woman of extraordinary merit, and for whom Augustus had great affection, proposed the match to her brother. However this may be,

JULIA DAUGHTER OF AUGUSTUS



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after languishing there three years perished by starvation at the hands of the Emperor, who refused even to grant the privilege of burial. Many of his descendants are said to have attained the consular rank.

Augustus displayed the greatest interest in the welfare and fortunes of his grandchildren,—the offspring of Julia and Agrippa. The two eldest sons, Caius and Lucius, he adopted by the ceremony of purchase—a sort of fictitious sale—from their father, and took them into his own home, where they became his constant companions, their education being conducted in a great measure by their grandfather himself. They assumed the name of Cæsar, were marked out as consuls-elect, to take office at the proper age, and were introduced to the armies as the heirs of the Emperor.

But Livia, whose purpose to secure the throne for Tiberius had now become the engrossing passion of her life, was only biding her time, and the occasion soon arrived. Julia, the mother of the two young men, had already entered upon her career of infamy. After the death of Agrippa at the instance of Livia, she had been given in marriage to the latter's eldest son, Tiberius, and the way thus paved, as Livia thought, for the adoption of Tiberius as the Emperor's son and heir, if Julia's children could be removed. Julia had become so notorious, through her relations with Sempronius Gracchus, even during the lifetime of Agrippa, that Tiberius was inspired—or pretended to be—with disgust for her from the start. It seems unquestionable that this was part of a deep-laid plan on the part of Livia to alienate her husband's affections from his daughter, as an important step in her plan. It is even said that Livia herself had deliberately tempted Julia to set out upon her evil ways, although of this there is no suf-

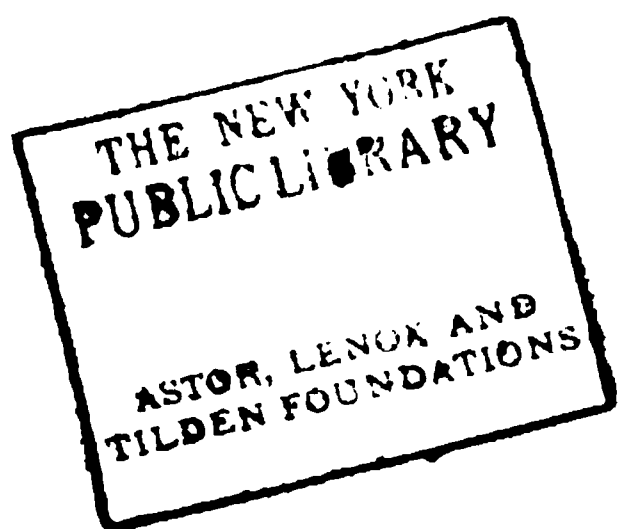
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

ficient proof. Gracchus, who might have been a witness of the fact, was afterwards murdered by order of Tiberius.

However this may be, Tiberius soon separated from his wife and withdrew to the island of Rhodes, where he lived in the greatest retirement. During his absence Julia was guilty of such open shamelessness that Augustus himself divorced her in the name of his son-in-law, presenting the facts to the Senate in a message read by the quæstor. The fate of Julia was as wretched as her mature life had been abominable. She was first banished by her father to the island of Pandataria, off the coast of Campania, where she was treated with the greatest harshness. Five years later she was removed to Reggio (in Calabria) and treated with less severity; but her father always refused to forgive her, replying to the Roman people, who several times interposed in her behalf, "I wish you all had such daughters and wives as she is." Finally, in continued disgrace and exile, after the flight of all hope by the murder of her last son, she died of starvation at the hands of her husband and stepbrother, Tiberius, who had succeeded her father as Emperor. Truly the ways of the transgressor are hard.

With the disgrace and banishment of Julia, Livia felt that the moment had arrived, and the hopes which Augustus cherished in his favorite grandsons were speedily brought to an end. Lucius Cæsar, the youngest, was suddenly taken ill, while on his way to assume command of the army in Spain, and died at Massilia in the year 1. A few months later his elder brother, Caius Cæsar, who was in command on the Parthian frontier, received a slight wound in Armenia. It seemed a mere scratch at the time, but on his way home he was taken ill in Lycia and died there. Each of them, as Tacitus discreetly says, "cut off

AGRIPPA



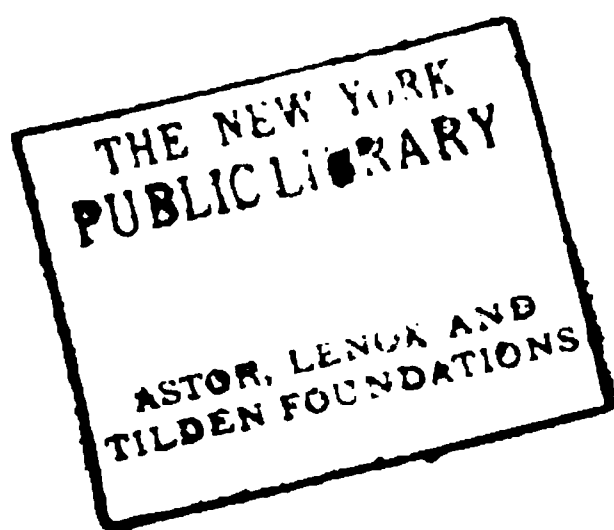
THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS

either by a death premature but natural, or by the arts of their stepmother Livia." From all the surrounding circumstances, in connection with what had gone before and what followed, we must believe that it was a case of art, rather than nature.

Lucius Cæsar was not married, but his brother Caius had for a wife Livia, the daughter of his stepfather's (Tiberius) brother Drusus, who had married the Emperor's niece, Antonia. Caius and Livia had no children, but after the death of the former his widow married her own cousin, Drusus, only son of the Emperor Tiberius. The wretched fate of Livia, her second husband, and their children will appear in a following chapter.

Of the remaining children of Julia and Agrippa, Julia, who seems to have been the eldest daughter, was married to Lucius Æmilius Paulus, a grandnephew of the triumvir Lepidus.¹ Including his own holding of the office of chief magistrate, he was of consular rank in the fourth generation, and at the time of his marriage was at the head of what was considered the noblest house in Rome. So that the marriage was in every respect gratifying to the pride and ambition of the first Emperor, who foresaw in this new alliance the promise of another line of descendants who would strengthen the pretensions of his house. As matter of fact, the blood of Augustus was through this marriage transmitted to the fifth generation. But instead of adding strength to the imperial structure, the very existence of these descendants, with their powerful claims to the throne, provoked the successors of Augustus to additional acts of violence against their kindred, and thus contributed to the obliteration of the family and the final ruin of the edifice. Every one of the links in this chain

¹ *Ante*, page 21.



THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS

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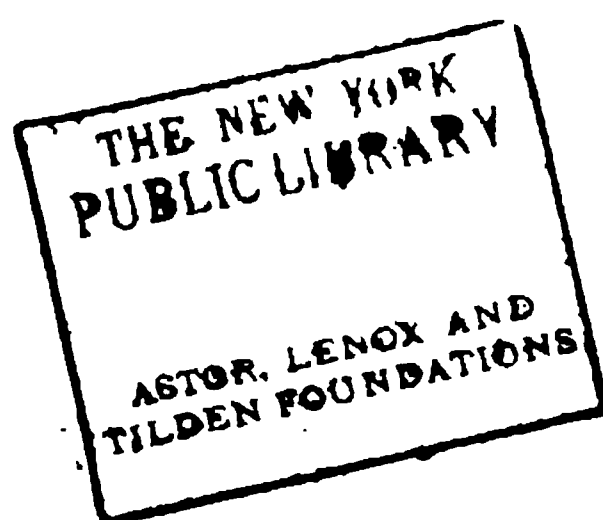
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Tiberius by the Emperor. Never was her crafty nature more cunningly displayed than now. The opportunity was not ripe to destroy the remaining heir, Postumus Agrippa. Although she had become an object of suspicion to the public through the premature deaths of the two Cæsars, thus far she had played the game without in the slightest arousing her husband's suspicion. Another death at this juncture might awaken his distrust and destroy his confidence forever. The risk would be too great. She would make one more flight of the long ascent upon which she had toiled so patiently and remorselessly. The result could be made equally sure. And so Augustus was importuned by his wife, whose influence over him was still unbounded, to adopt both Tiberius and the surviving son of Agrippa as his children and heirs to the throne. It was a master stroke. Postumus Agrippa had never been a favorite. He was of a coarse nature, given to folly, and intractable. His future was at the best uncertain; Rome must not be left without a master; and besides, was not Tiberius already his son, by marriage with Julia? The Emperor was easily persuaded, and Agrippa and Tiberius were adopted in the Forum, by a law passed for the purpose by the Senate about the year 8 A. D. The remainder of Livia's task was easy. By frequent playing upon the brutal temperament and unruly disposition of Postumus Agrippa and exaggerating his faults upon every occasion, she readily enlarged the Emperor's prejudices against his grandson, until finally the unfortunate young man was banished to the island of Planasia, where a guard of soldiers was placed about him under an act that he be confined for life, which Augustus procured from his servile Senate. Nothing now remained for him but death at the hands of his grandfather's wife and his mother's husband, who was his brother by adoption.

AGRIPPA



THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS

And now Livia was triumphant; her son Tiberius remained the sole heir to the sovereignty of Rome. Augustus never spoke of the two Julias—his daughter and granddaughter—and of his grandson Agrippa except as “the three cancers.” He left a memorandum with his will that the two Julias should not be buried in his tomb. True, there remained his other granddaughter, Agrippina, a woman of noble nature and high spirit, who had become the wife of a man of elevated character, Livia’s grandson, Germanicus. And in order to ensure the succession for a longer period, Tiberius was shortly compelled by Augustus to adopt Germanicus as his son—notwithstanding the fact that he already had a son Drusus, by his first wife, Vipsania Agrippina. But these things in effect only contributed to Livia’s delight and increased her pride and vanity from the additional assurance which they conveyed that sovereign power and authority would be continued in her family. Nothing remained for the complete fulfilment of her dream but the death of Augustus, and that was not to be long delayed.

It has been commonly accepted that Augustus came to his end in the course of nature and died peacefully in the arms of his wife. The historian Suetonius, in relating the occurrence declares that when the end was visibly approaching Livia sent hasty messengers for Tiberius, with whom the dying Emperor had a long and affectionate interview, and pretends that his last words were “Farewell, Livia, and ever be mindful of our long union.” Tacitus, on the other hand, insists that it was never clearly established whether these stories were not fabrications, and whether the Emperor was not dead when Tiberius arrived at Nola. He declares that there were many conflicting rumors about the event; among others, that Augustus had secretly

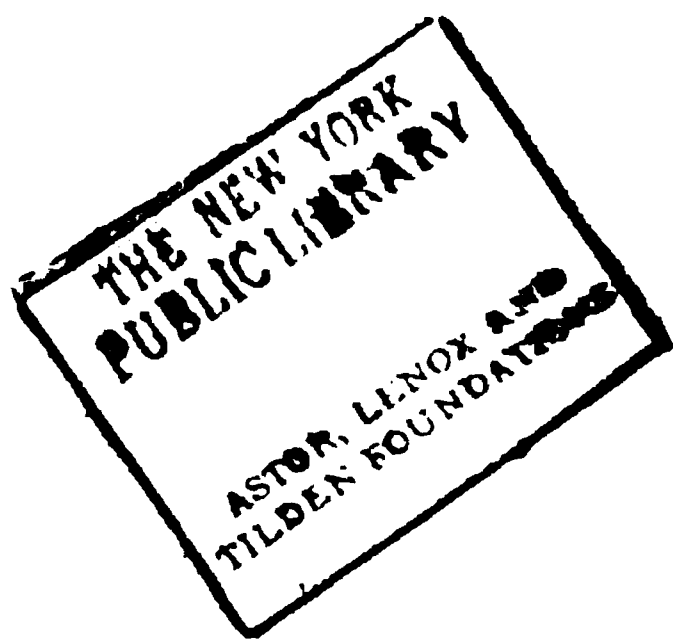
CHAPTER IV

TIBERIUS CÆSAR, THE SECOND EMPEROR

FROM 14 A. D. TO 37 A. D.

TIBERIUS NERO, Cæsar by adoption, was descended from the Claudian family. He was the son of Tiberius Nero and Livia Drusilla. His father attained distinction under Julius Cæsar, in the Alexandrine war. After the death of Cæsar, Tiberius espoused the cause of Antony and for a time made some headway in fomenting opposition to Augustus. But he was soon overcome and compelled to flee with his wife to Sicily, and thence to Achaia. It is said that Augustus first saw the beautiful wife of Tiberius at the time of this flight, but it seems probable that the meeting did not occur until after the Bologna compact made it safe for Tiberius to return to Rome, his name not appearing upon the proscribed list, which presumably would not have been the case if Augustus was already enamoured of his wife. And all the traditions agree that with Augustus it was "love at first sight." The fatal meeting perhaps occurred at the wedding of Mark Antony and Octavia, after the peace of Brundisium, at which the bride was attended by Livia, at that time a beautiful young woman of eighteen. Augustus was about twenty-six years old, and his second wife, Scribonia, was living and about to present him with an heir. But he was fascinated by the charms of Livia and immediately requested Tiberius Nero to resign his wife. The latter obeyed the command—for such in effect it was—notwithstanding the fact that his wife was young, beautiful, and accomplished, the mother of one son, and about to present him with an-

CAIUS CÆSAR SON OF JULIA AND AGRIPPA

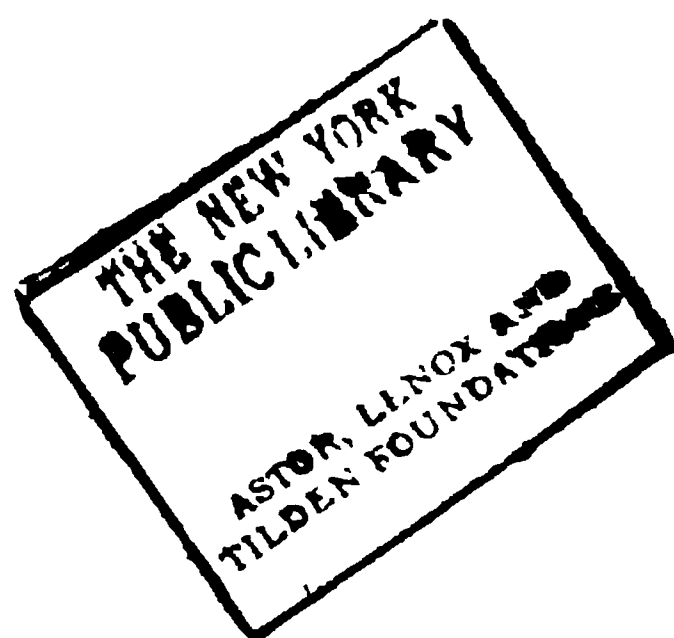


TIBERIUS CÆSAR

other. As Cæsar was master of Rome, with a dozen legions at his back, and Tiberius had barely crossed the threshold of forgiveness after his rebellion, it was doubtless a case of coercive persuasion. We may to a certain extent appreciate the reasons for his compliance in those times of lawless proscription, but it is difficult to understand his final degradation in the matter; he is said to have actually officiated at the marriage and in the character of father bestowed his beautiful young wife upon the future Emperor. His friends afterwards declared that he yielded to this public humiliation to save his life. It would seem that the life of a man who would submit to such demands was not worth saving; and so the gods evidently considered, even in degenerate Rome, for Tiberius Nero died very soon afterwards. His second son, Drusus, was born about three months after the marriage of Livia and Augustus.

Tiberius Nero, afterwards Tiberius Cæsar, was born in the Palatine quarter at Rome upon the sixteenth of the Calends of December, 712 A. U. C. (November 16, 89 B. C.). He and his brother Drusus seem to have experienced the love and affection of Augustus, and at the early age of nineteen years Tiberius received his first public appointment, that of quæstor, thereafter holding successively the offices of prætor and consul. He achieved a decided military success in the East, where he was sent after the failure and death of Crassus in the Parthian war, and seems also to have displayed no less ability in the administration of his civil offices under the State.

In view of his military and other successes and his relations with the Emperor, it would not be unnatural if he had shared in the ambitious schemes which were cherished in his behalf by the bold and unscrupulous Empress. But all of their hopes were, for the time being at least, dispelled



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THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

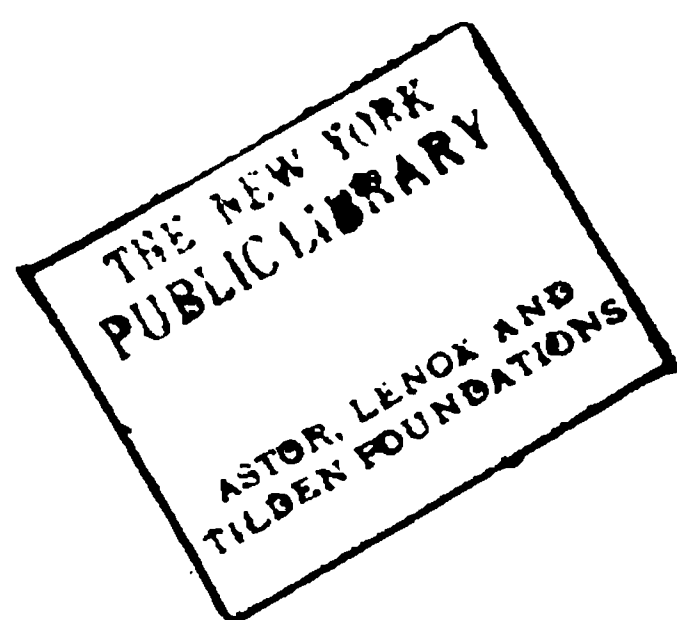
represented to the Emperor as proceeding from unendurable shame at the conduct of Julia, now apparently for the first time brought to the Emperor's knowledge. Tiberius refused to listen to the entreaties of Augustus—in which his mother hypocritically joined—and finally sailed away for Rhodes, where the news was soon received that Julia had been divorced from him by Augustus himself.

After living in retirement eight years (his request to return after Julia's banishment having been denied), he was recalled by his mother's influence and passed the two succeeding years in privacy at Rome. Then came the deaths of Caius and Lucius, the Emperor's adoptive sons, the joint adoption of Tiberius and Postumus Agrippa, the Emperor's grandson, and finally the banishment of Postumus, which left Tiberius the heir-apparent of the imperial power, now crystallized in the person and title of Cæsar.

From this time until the death of Augustus—a period of perhaps ten years—Tiberius was actively engaged with affairs of State, either in the conduct of his various public offices at Rome, or in successfully conducting military enterprises abroad. He acquired great glory by his military successes, was repeatedly honored with the highest offices, and finally celebrated a pompous triumph, his imperial father superintending the solemnity. It was the most honorable period of his life, and it would have been fortunate for his memory if he had never lived to taste the pleasures of unlimited power, which in those days was synonymous with unbridled license. For, as Tacitus declares, the latter part of his reign exhibited only a dreadful uniformity of guilt; “of savage mandates and incessant accusations, when friendship was without confidence and innocence was no protection.”

As we have seen, the death of the Emperor was care-

LUCIUS CÆSAR SON OF JULIA AND AGRIPPA



TIBERIUS CÆSAR

fully concealed by Livia until the accession of her son was an accomplished fact. This was done through the immediate assumption by Tiberius of the military functions of the Emperor. The prætorian guard submitted to his control and received from him the watchword. This was half the battle; it foreshadowed the final degradation of the State, when the army chose the Emperor without even consulting the Senate, selecting on occasion that candidate who bid the largest cash sum for the office. But now the form of securing the Senate's approval was still to be observed, and here Tiberius displayed the greatest hypocrisy—pretending that he had convened the Senate merely in right of his tribunitian power, to read the late Emperor's will and honor him with an apotheosis. Upon being urged to ascend the throne, he assumed great diffidence, deprecating his abilities to sustain the burdens of government, and suggesting that the duties of the State would better be apportioned among several citizens. But finally, in the midst of the confusion, some one bluntly cried out, "Let him either accept or decline at once," while at the same moment one of his friends declared to his face, "Others are slow to perform what they promise, while you are slow to promise what you actually perform!" So that finally his pretended reluctance gave way and, as Suetonius puts it, "complaining of the miserable and burdensome service imposed upon him, he accepted the government"; and the wretched relic of Roman pride and virtue, represented by a subservient Senate and a degraded aristocracy, voluntarily accepted the yoke of an infamous servitude which, with an occasional interruption, was to endure for many centuries.

Tiberius was somewhat above the usual stature, broad shouldered, well formed, and robust. He is said to have

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

been very handsome, with regular features, large dark eyes, long curling hair, and a very fair complexion. He bore himself with the springy step, erect carriage, and frowning countenance of a successful military leader and spoke with the deliberation of a man who, having weighed his words carefully, expected that after he had spoken every one would consider the subject closed. Until the latter part of his reign, when protracted excesses began to tell upon even his iron constitution, his health was uninterruptedly good; and it is said that from his thirtieth year he lived without medical assistance whatsoever.

He never entirely abandoned the active habits of army life, at the close of his military career indulging freely in his favorite exercises of riding and fencing. During the ordinary fatigues of a campaign he seemed to take pleasure in unnecessary hardships, frequently passing the night without a tent, and taking his meals while sitting on the bare ground. He was a strict disciplinarian and in the conduct of his campaigns displayed the attributes not only of a good soldier, but of an able leader as well. In addition to the convincing fact of his successes, his ability in war is well attested by the Emperor Augustus, a shrewd observer of men and events, who in various letters extolled Tiberius as a consummate general.

Unlike his immediate successors, he was niggardly (if not actually miserly) in the extreme; dispensing nothing in charity, giving no public entertainments, and undertaking no public works except the building of the temple of Augustus and the restoration of Pompey's theatre, both of which he even left unfinished. His covetousness and the passion for accumulation soon led him into acts of high-handed oppression, not infrequently amounting to sheer robbery, without even the form of confiscation, which

TIBERIUS CÆSAR

latter, however, was his favorite method of adding to his treasure.

He professed an extreme aversion to flattery of every sort, refusing frequently to allow persons of rank to approach for the purpose of extending him a civility; while if any one ventured, either in conversation or a set speech, to pay him a compliment, he immediately interrupted the speaker with a reprimand.

The cruel and sullen temper displayed by him in childhood became more pronounced in mature life, and during the last part of his reign his disposition in this respect became so manifest that even Caligula was not more feared and hated by the Romans than Tiberius had been. While many of his barbarous actions were performed under the pretence of what was termed "strictness and reformation of manners," it must be considered as proven that in the large majority of cases they were done merely to gratify his own savage disposition. His unbounded tyranny and cold brutality provoked bitter reproaches from his victims; many of those condemned to die addressing the most opprobrious remarks to him, while the accusations of others were scattered among the senators in the form of written hand-bills. To all this—at least until towards the close of his life—Tiberius was insensible; declaring that "in a free state, both the tongue and the mind ought to be free."

In regard to other and more shameful vices, the Emperor Tiberius seems to have set the pace for Caligula and Nero, and while the latter in some parts of the circuit outstripped his vile prototype, Tiberius must be accorded the badge of general infamy for his life in the island of Capri.

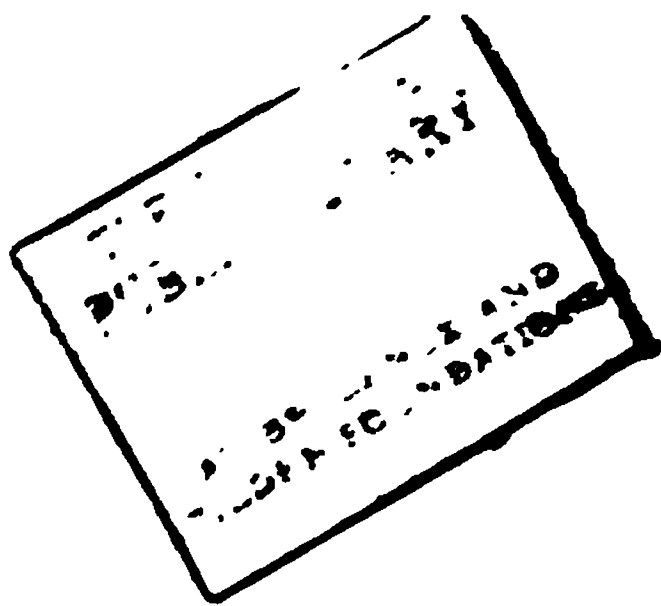
And yet in exercising the supreme power, which he as-

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

sumed by slow degrees, he seems to have been occasionally moved by a regard for the public good. He frequently interposed to prevent ill management and injustice, encouraged economy in the administration of public affairs, expelled the astrologers, and—as we are told—“took upon himself the correction of public morals, where they tended to decay either through neglect or evil custom”; this latter, of course, with the usual result where the blind ventures to lead the blind.

The history of Tiberius is the direct counterpart of that of his predecessor. The duplicity, low cunning, and wicked selfishness which characterized the earlier part of the first Emperor's life had in later years given way to a decided show of moderation, decent living, and wise concern for the prosperity, welfare, and glory of the State. The adopted son of Augustus, who had been distinguished for the really great qualities displayed during the earlier part of his life, immediately following his accession commenced yielding to the very lowest promptings of his nature, and in the end fulfilled to the unhappy people over whom he ruled the prophetic death-bed saying of Augustus: “Alas! Unhappy Roman people, to be ground by the jaws of such a slow devourer!”

POSTUMUS AGRIPPA



CHAPTER V

THE FAMILY OF TIBERIUS

OF all the emperors of the house of Cæsar, Tiberius was the least married; for while Augustus had three wives, Caligula, the third Emperor, five, Claudius, the fourth Emperor, six, and Nero, the fifth Emperor, three, Tiberius had but two, one of these even being forced upon him against his inclination.

By his first wife, Vipsania Agrippina, the daughter of Agrippa by his first wife, Pomponia (and thus the step-daughter of Tiberius's second wife), and the granddaughter on her mother's side of Cæcilius Atticus (a Roman knight to whom many of the epistles of Cicero are addressed), he had one son, Drusus. The son afterwards born to him by Julia died in infancy, so that his posterity was from Drusus alone. It is to be remembered, however, that after the banishment of Postumus Agrippa, following the adoption of Tiberius and himself by Augustus, the latter compelled Tiberius to himself adopt his brother's son, Germanicus. After the fiction of an adoption by purchase, all of the rights and duties of both the adopted child and the parent surrendering him attached to the new relationship; and the adoptive child was universally considered, and by writers of contemporaneous history commonly spoken of, as the "son" of the adoptive parent. In the family of Tiberius is therefore to be included his adopted son, Germanicus, as well as his own son, Drusus.

The first mention of Drusus is his introduction into the Forum by his father upon the latter's return from his self-imposed exile at Rhodes. Later he was sent to quell an

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

insurrection among the legions in Pannonia and seems to have acquitted himself with tact and ability. Upon his return he was accorded a triumph and had the further honor of two consulships, the second in conjunction with his father, who during a part of it retired to Campania, leaving Drusus at the head of the State. Germanicus was dead at this time, and everything indicated an assured succession in Drusus and his posterity. But another Livia had come upon the scene, equally ambitious for power with the Augusta, and far surpassing her in wickedness and depravity, through which Drusus, her husband, was destroyed, the hopes of his house swept away, and she herself came to an unpitied death at the hands of the frenzied Tiberius.

Livia was the sister of Germanicus—that is, of her husband's adoptive brother. She was first married to the young Caius Cæsar, the son of Julia and Agrippa, and after his death she became the wife of Drusus, who was her own cousin. Granddaughter of Augustus by her first marriage, and his grandniece by the blood, through her mother Antonia, who was the daughter of Augustus's sister Octavia by Mark Antony, she seemed a most illustrious consort for the reigning Emperor's only son. The pride and satisfaction of Tiberius in this union were heightened with the birth of twin boys to Livia; a matter of so much joy to the Emperor that he could not refrain from boasting "that to no Roman of the same eminence before him were ever two children born at a birth." Upon which the historian Tacitus dryly remarks: "Thus to his own glory he turned all things, even mere accidents."

The birth of the twins, who were called Caius and Tiberius Nero (afterwards commonly referred to as Tiberius Gemellus), was followed by that of a daughter, named Julia. Caius died in infancy.

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At the time of the birth of these children Germanicus was still living, and in order to a just understanding of the tragedy that was impending, his character and the relationship which he bore to public events must be first considered.

The ancestry of Germanicus was illustrious. His father, Drusus, was the only brother of the Emperor Tiberius, while his mother, the younger Antonia, greatly celebrated, as Plutarch tells us, for her beauty and virtue, was the daughter of one of the noblest Roman matrons, the beautiful Octavia, the sister of Augustus. Octavia's husband was Mark Antony, who was thus the grandfather of Germanicus. Germanicus was also the adoptive son of Tiberius, to whose son also his sister Livia was married. Germanicus himself had married Agrippina, one of the children of Agrippa and Julia; so that his offspring were the great-grandchildren of Augustus. Moreover, his adoption into the family of the reigning Cæsar was known to have proceeded from the will of the divine Augustus himself. His relationship to the throne, therefore, alike by blood, affinity, and imperial favor, was of the highest and closest. And finally, Germanicus was a man of the most elevated character, of a handsome person, high courage, eloquent and gifted in various branches of learning, while at the same time blessed with an unassuming disposition and a remarkable sweetness of manners; in short, as one historian declares, it seems to have been generally agreed that he "possessed all the noblest endowments of body and mind in a higher degree than had ever before fallen to the lot of any man." In the midst of all the abandoned wickedness and horrible nightmares to which Roman life was given up in the times of the Cæsars, when virtue had been trampled in the mud, when sensuality had been deified,

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when honor and truth and love and all the finer emotions of the soul had given way to a consuming lust for power and the gratification of brutal instincts; after wading through page after page of the most sickening and horrible recitals, what a relief to come upon this simple little tribute to virtue, in the words of the historian, that "*Germanicus reaped the fruit of his noble qualities in abundance, being much esteemed and beloved by his friends.*" And so virtue was not yet entirely dead—not even in besotted Rome. The great poet, to whom the house of Cæsar furnished the theme for one of the most wonderful of his immortal creations, in this picture of Germanicus might well have found his inspiration for the line,

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

But however high the claims of Germanicus, and however great his popularity with the people, there was not wanting a support to the pretensions of Drusus, who of course had the countenance of the Emperor himself and of his grandmother, the indomitable Livia. So that Rome was divided in its affections: a large part of the Court, including the most sordid and venal patricians, declared for Drusus, the Emperor's own son; while others of the nobles and practically all of the people (the influence of the latter, however, counting for comparatively nothing) were for Germanicus. Of course there were not wanting those who sought to enlist Drusus in his own interest and against Germanicus; but to the lasting honor of the former be it said that he would not listen to the suggestion. The harmonious relations of the brothers were unbroken, and after the death of Germanicus his children continued to receive especial kindness from Drusus.

But if Drusus was too high minded to act against Ger-

TIBERIUS

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THE FAMILY OF TIBERIUS

manicus, there were others not so scrupulous, and indeed how would it have been possible for a man of his undoubted virtue to have escaped? Disturbances having arisen in the East, Germanicus was sent to Syria, to regulate its affairs. Tiberius at the same time appointed a new governor of the province in the person of Cneius Piso, whose wife, Plāncina, secretly instigated by Livia Augusta, had been for some time engaged in a mean persecution of Germanicus's wife, Agrippina. That Piso actually had authority from the Emperor to destroy Germanicus must be considered not proven. But his subsequent conduct demonstrates beyond a doubt that he at least supposed that Tiberius had appointed him to the command in Syria expressly to defeat the views of Germanicus. Urged on as well by his wife as by his own unscrupulous ambition, he opposed Germanicus at every turn, and finally succeeded in administering to him a slow poison from which the nephew of the Emperor finally died—before his death explicitly accusing Piso of being his murderer.

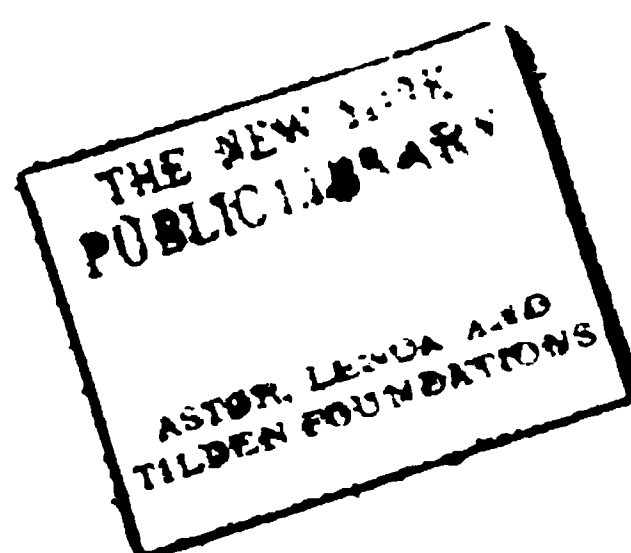
The grief and consternation of both Rome and the provinces passes description—Piso and Plāncina alone, of all the world, openly exhibiting an indecent joy; although, of course, there were others who exulted in secret. At Rome, when the news arrived, stones were hurled at the temples, the altars of some of the gods demolished and the Lares and Penates thrown into the streets. Germanicus had been the hero and the hope of the great body of the Roman people, whose mourning was so genuine that even the special edicts passed for that purpose could not restrain it. And while all history unites in according to Germanicus a virtue which shone with a brilliant and solitary lustre in those times of public oppression and private

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Early in his accession to power, Tiberius had chosen for commander of the prætorian guards an artful and adroit and at the same time bold and daring knight named Ælius Sejanus. This man had skilfully enlarged the power of his office, until then quite moderate, by gathering into one camp the cohorts of the guard, which hitherto had been scattered throughout the city. From this time the military power may be said to have controlled in determining the succession. Sejanus was as unscrupulous as he was shrewd and ambitious, and with the first taste of power and influence, he began to entertain the most daring projects, which aimed at nothing less than to secure the throne. With the army behind him—the good will of the soldiers having been gained through his undoubted courage coupled with both tact and dissimulation and supplemented by bribery and corruption, where the rest failed—the members of the imperial family were the only obstacles to his ambition. To be sure, their number was large; besides the son and grandson of Tiberius there were the descendants of the Emperor's brother Drusus, including the three sons of Germanicus. But to Sejanus this meant simply the necessity of protracted killing, instead of the wholesale murder which would have attracted attention, although simpler and more to his mind.

He began in a way which can be characterized only as devilish. The first person to be removed was the Emperor's son Drusus, against whom Sejanus cherished a bitter personal resentment on account of a blow which he had received from the haughty prince during a dispute between them. Livia, the wife of Drusus, is said to have been very beautiful, and Sejanus, pretending to be overcome by her attractions, seduced her, and when thus in his power, induced her to share in his scheme by promising to make

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her his Empress when he should have gained the throne. And thus, musingly remarks the annalist, "the niece of Augustus, the daughter-in-law of Tiberius, the mother of the children of Drusus, disgraced herself, her ancestors, and her posterity by a connection with an adulterer from a municipal town; exchanging an honorable certainty for guilty prospects which might never be realized."¹

The wife of Drusus was now fully launched upon her wicked career. Her physician was admitted into the plot, and Sejanus having first divorced his wife, who was the mother of three little children, and thus assured Livia that her lover would be at once available as a second husband, the latter was ready to despatch her first, and Drusus was poisoned. Suspicion was at the time entirely diverted from the murderers, who were discovered only after an interval of eight years by confession of Eudemus, the physician, and a slave of Sejanus.

The death of Drusus awakened hopes among the friends of Germanicus, whose three sons, notwithstanding the fact that the two sons of Drusus were still living, were now commonly regarded as in the line of succession. Their mother, Agrippina, proud and haughty, but severe in her Roman virtue, had surrounded them with devoted friends and wise counsellors, and the conspirators found it impossible to dispose of them by the same means with which the death of Drusus had been accomplished. It was evident that Agrippina must first be removed, and Sejanus having succeeded—easily, as we are quite ready to believe—in rousing the hatred of the old Augusta, the two Livias engaged to persuade the Emperor that "proud of her numerous offspring and relying upon the affections of the people, Agrippina had designs upon the sovereignty."

¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, iv. 8.

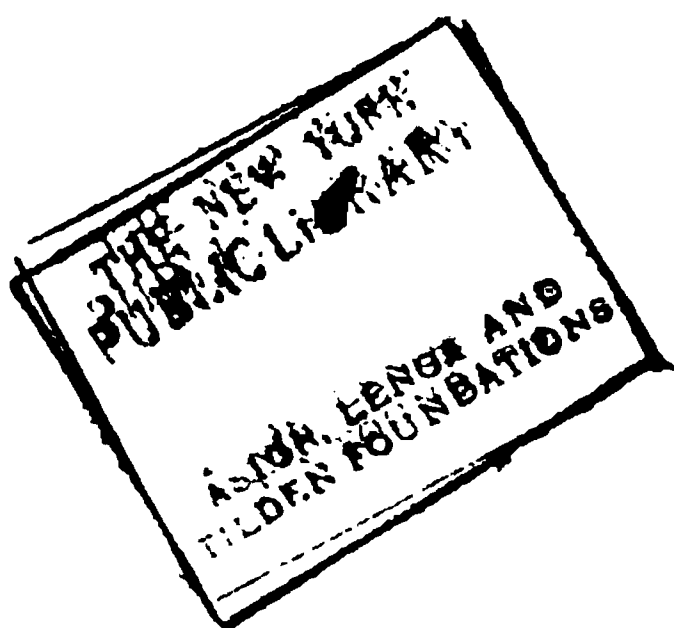
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

and various things which he had said—or which she pretended he had said—in his sleep. These were repeated to the Emperor by Sejanus, with dark insinuations of the crimes which Nero had in contemplation. The unscrupulous favorite also succeeded in drawing into the combination Nero's brother Drusus, by tempting him with the prospect of empire if his elder brother could be first removed. Everything thus progressing well and Cæsar's favor having been especially manifested by his consent to the betrothal of the daughter of Sejanus with a son of the Emperor's nephew Claudius, the brother of Germanicus and Livia, the latter now importuned Sejanus to request the Emperor's consent to their marriage.

Sejanus was intoxicated with excess of fortune. His power had increased to such an extent that there remained scarcely any access to honors except through his favor. Only this last *coup* remained to ensure him the succession, when his meditated removal of the children of Germanicus should be accomplished. He had received the most convincing proof of the Emperor's favor and now confidently presented to him a memorial, begging for himself the honor of an alliance with the widowed Livia.

But he had presumed too far upon the complacency of Cæsar. While the refusal of Tiberius was cautiously expressed, he nevertheless made it plain to Sejanus that the time had gone by when the hand of a daughter of the Cæsars might be aspired to by a mere Roman knight. Moreover, the Emperor used certain expressions which filled Sejanus with actual alarm for the ultimate success of his projects upon the lines which he was then following, and it became necessary to immediately rearrange his plans. The marriage with Livia was abandoned as at once impossible and unnecessary, and after strengthening his

DRUSUS SON OF TIBERIUS



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influence with the army, Sejanus used all of his persuasion to induce the Emperor to withdraw from Rome to Capri, in the Bay of Naples, access to which could be readily guarded by a military force. Tiberius, who, at this period of his career at least, knew no enjoyment except that of sensual pleasure, was easily persuaded to a course which promised unlicensed abandonment to the cruelties and dissolute pleasures which might have been attended with personal danger in Rome, corrupt and slavish as the capital had become; and Sejanus now began openly to exercise the actual powers of sovereignty. But his increasing arrogance at last roused the fear and suspicion of his besotted master, whose eyes seem to have been opened to the conduct of his favorite by Antonia, the aged mother of Germanicus. And so, in the mercy of Providence, this monster of iniquity, at the very moment of his anticipated triumph, was charged by Tiberius with conspiracy, and the Senate, ever ready to obey, condemned him to death with alacrity. He was strangled in prison, and his body dragged to the Tiber, his friends put to death under cruel tortures, and finally his innocent little children likewise murdered under circumstances of the most horrible and unnamable atrocity. Their mother—the divorced Apicata—committed suicide upon hearing of the murder of her children. It was a rare position—that of imperial favorite in the days of the Cæsars.

For Livia, his wretched accomplice, there remained nothing but to drink to its dregs the cup of bitterness which she herself had filled. Ten short years before, excepting only the Augusta herself, she had been the first lady in the greatest city of the world. The great-granddaughter of the divine Augustus, sister of the idolized Germanicus, wife of the Emperor's only son, Drusus, the

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sole heir to the throne, and mother of two sons in the direct line of succession, beautiful, accomplished, and powerful—she had scattered everything to the winds in yielding to the basest impulses. And now her husband and one son dead and her noble brother and his family destroyed indirectly through her means, she herself was cast off upon a sea of wretchedness which had no bounds. The missing chapters of the “Annals” leave us in darkness as to the details of these last years of her life. But after the death of Sejanus, in the year 31 A. D., his former wife, Apicata, revealed his murder of the Emperor’s son Drusus; and upon the disclosure of Livia’s complicity in the crime, she was put to death by her father-in-law, who caused the most rigorous decrees to be passed against even her statues and memory.

With the death of his son, the last link which bound the Emperor to the semblance of family affection appears to have been broken. He seemed little concerned during the illness of Drusus and not much affected at his death. One of his grandsons, Caius, had died; the other, Tiberius, was hated as having been conceived in adultery—so the Emperor maliciously declared, but without apparent foundation. The two eldest sons of Germanicus, Nero and Drusus, he had commended to the Senate with the remark that the good and evil which should befall them—the great-grandsons of Augustus—must extend to the commonwealth. And forthwith he himself proceeded to bring down upon the hapless young men evil without measure. After the banishment of their mother, Agrippina, Nero and Drusus were themselves condemned, fettered with chains, and cast into prison. In his youth Nero, who seems to have inherited some of the gracefulness and modesty of his father, had been especially favored by the Emperor. He

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was now charged by Tiberius with the most abominable crimes, banished to the island of Ponza, and there vanished into darkness. His brother Drusus was thrown into one of the horrible dungeons of the Palatine, that crime-saturated palace of the Cæsars, where, at the expiration of three years, he was starved to death. In the agonies of hunger he even ate the chaff with which his mattress was stuffed, and Tacitus affirms that in this way he protracted his existence until the ninth day. The centurion in charge afterwards related that when his last hopes had fled, the wretched young prince poured forth the most frenzied imprecation upon his great-uncle; declaring that "as he had slaughtered his son's wife, the son of his brother, and his son's sons, and filled his whole house with carnage, so might he pay to the uttermost the penalty of his crimes, in justice of his name, the generations of his forefathers, and posterity." It is almost beyond belief that the Emperor caused this report of Actius to be read publicly to the senators, who interrupted the reading with exclamations of assumed horror at these imprecations.

Drusus married Æmilia Lepida, an own cousin of the Æmilia Lepida who was the first wife of Drusus's uncle Claudius.¹ After the destruction of her husband, she too seems to have been put to death,² with the approval, if not under the direct orders, of Tiberius. Neither Drusus nor his brother Nero left any children.

The death of the Emperor's mother, Livia Augusta

¹ *Post*, page 104. This Æmilia Lepida was the daughter of M. Æmilius Lepidus, a younger brother of Lucius Æmilius Paulus, who married Julia, the granddaughter of Augustus. *Ante*, page 89.

² This is upon the authority of Tacitus (*Annals*, vi. 40). But the reference is a trifle obscure, and a modern writer states that this Lepida died during the reign of Claudius. See *post*, page 107, as to the difficulty of tracing through the female line, owing to the absence of *prænomena* among women.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

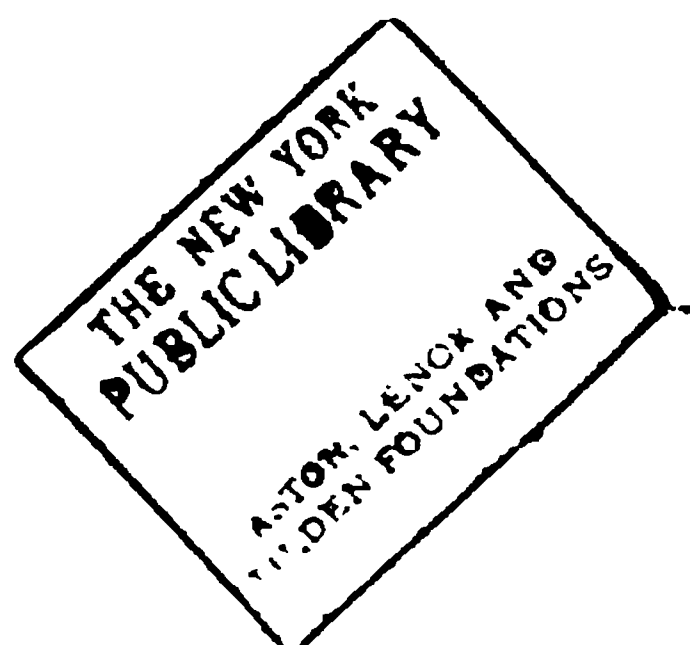
(29 A. D.), had preceded that of her great-grandson Nero, and the death of Drusus was almost immediately followed by the coerced suicide of Agrippina, the mother of the young princes. Tiberius did not even attend the funeral of his mother—excusing himself therefor to the Senate upon the ground of pressure of business. In the case of Agrippina, whose death he had accomplished, the Emperor still further demeaned himself by uttering the most shameful slanders against her, and reminded the Senate that she had died on the second anniversary of the death of the traitor Sejanus, which fact he declared ought to be recorded; whereupon the servile Senate decreed that on that day a yearly offering should be presented to Jupiter forever.

From now on the Emperor abandoned himself to every species of cruelty. The astrologer Thrasyllus, who had great influence over him, restrained him for a time by the argument that his life would be prolonged by deferring some of his meditated acts of vengeance against members of his family especially. In this way the remaining children of Germanicus, his own son Tiberius, and his daughter Julia and her descendants (she had married again) escaped for the time. It would probably not have been for long, however, had not tardy death at last overtaken him, this father who used to exclaim, “Happy Priam, who survived all his children!”

But the Parcæ had decreed that by the hand of Cæsar Cæsar should die, and the death of Tiberius opened no escape to the descendants who survived him. His only surviving grandson, Tiberius Gemellus, received a tardy show of justice from the Emperor, who named him with Caius Cæsar (Caligula) as the imperial heirs. After his grandfather's death Gemellus was arrested and accused

TIBERIUS GEMELLUS

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THE FAMILY OF TIBERIUS

of having expressed the hope that the Emperor would not recover from his illness. There was no meeting this accusation and Caligula sent word to his cousin to kill himself. Tiberius, who is said to have been a mild and gentle youth, who had never seen a man killed, begged the soldiers to themselves put him to death, and upon their refusal asked them at least to show him where and how to strike. With this request the centurion graciously complied, giving him a sword and indicating where his heart was. Thanking the rough soldier, the poor boy stabbed himself and perished instantly.

Julia, the remaining grandchild of Tiberius, after the murder of her husband Nero, married Rubellius Blandus, the grandson of a Roman knight from Tibur. Julia survived until the next reign but one, when she and her cousin of the same name (a daughter of Germanicus) were put to death by their uncle, the Emperor Claudius,¹ who was instigated to the murder by the horrible Messalina. By her marriage with Blandus, Julia had a son, Rubellius Plautus. This young nobleman seems to have been of blameless character and of a sober and retiring disposition. Such characteristics in the person of a Cæsar were sure guaranties of a violent death. Instigated by the monster Tigellinus, and alarmed as well by the popular praise of Plautus, whose fame only resounded the more with his attempts to withdraw himself from popular notice and the dangers of public life, Nero, who was then Emperor, notified Plautus that he would best "retire from Rome, and in Asia, where he had possessions, end his days in peace and quiet." This was merely one of the forms of family death-warrant, but Plautus gladly left Rome in company with his wife and a few devoted friends. One day he re-

¹ *Post*, page 111.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

ceived a message from his father-in-law that a centurion was on the way to kill him and that "if he would immediately escape, out of the compassion that would be felt for a name so great he would find good men ready to espouse his cause." But Plautus was unmoved. The assassins found him in the middle of the day naked and engaged in corporeal work upon his estate. He was immediately butchered and his head carried to the tyrant at Rome.

Plautus had married Antistia, daughter of Lucius Antistius Vetus, by whom he is said to have had several children, whose lives, however, are untraced. It would be strange if anything but death in infancy saved them from the fate of Nero's mad determination to extirpate the house of Cæsar, root and branch. In his frantic search for victims even relations by marriage only did not escape, and both Antistia and her father Vetus were put to death under circumstances of great cruelty.¹

But long before this final extinction of his race the last page of the life of Tiberius had been turned. It presents a fitting conclusion of a series of horrible chapters. Worn out by his own atrocious crimes and revolting depravity, his body wasted and his strength exhausted, he retired to a villa which had once been occupied by Lucullus, at the promontory of Misenum, having previously in his extreme misery addressed to the Senate a letter which began, "What to write to you, Conscript Fathers, or how to write, or what not to write at this time, may all the gods and goddesses pour upon my head a more terrible vengeance than that under which I feel myself daily sinking, if I can tell." The pages of history may be searched in vain for a more agonizing confession that Nemesis had clutched

¹ *Post*, page 159.

THE FAMILY OF TIBERIUS

her victim at last. The end came speedily. In the midst of one of the entertainments with which the dying tyrant yet sought by sensual enjoyment to distract his sufferings, his physician Charicles, touching the Emperor's hand under pretence of taking his leave, felt his pulse and immediately reported to Macro, captain of the guards, that life was ebbing fast and could not last two days. Caius Cæsar was at once informed and expresses also sent to the army. The former, surrounded by a great congratulatory throng, was already setting out to enter upon the sovereignty when another message came to the effect that the Emperor had revived and called for food. But Macro, the Emperor's best friend and, since the death of Sejanus, the choicest instrument of his villainous cruelties, who aspired to a similar position under the new reign which was already inaugurated through the reports of his master's death—was he called upon to submit to such an unwarranted interference on the part of nature with the will of the Fates? Calmly he gave commands to pile the pillows and bed-clothes upon the dying Cæsar's face, until life should be extinguished. Thus died the Emperor Tiberius, in the seventy-eighth year of his age and the twenty-third of his reign, on the seventeenth before the Calends of April, 87 A. D. The news of his undoubted death was received at Rome with demonstrations of the wildest joy, and the city rang with shouts of "Down with his body to the Tiber!"

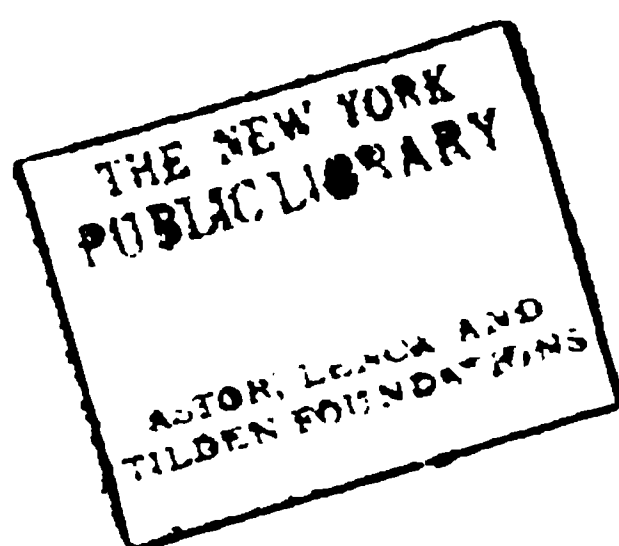
CHAPTER VI
CALIGULA, THE THIRD EMPEROR
FROM 37 A. D. TO 41 A. D.

WHILE succession to the imperial power was not regulated by law, on the part of the Cæsars themselves, at least, it was plainly intended that it should be determined by lineal descent. To be sure, the Emperor was said to be elected by "the authority of the Senate and the consent of the soldiers"; which seems to have been the constitutional language at least down to the time of the fifth Emperor.¹ And from the very beginning, as already observed, the support of the army was almost a *sine qua non* to the assumption of the purple by any candidate. In the selection of its chief ruler the destinies of the Empire may be said to have been ruled by the prætorian guard. But with this qualification: until after the death of Nero the voice of the reigning Cæsar was felt to be all-powerful upon the question of his successor; either when spoken in life, through the instrumentality of a formal adoption, or declared and published in a last will and testament. For example, it will be remembered that the Emperor Augustus, having in his lifetime adopted both Tiberius and Postumus Agrippa, in his will named the former as his chief heir and thus enabled him, although a stranger to the blood, to secure the throne to the exclusion of the Emperor's own grandson, who under the will was an heir in remainder only.

Tiberius, it is said, had been greatly puzzled in the selection of his successor. The son of Drusus was still only a

¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, xiii. 4.

DRUSUS BROTHER OF TIBERIUS

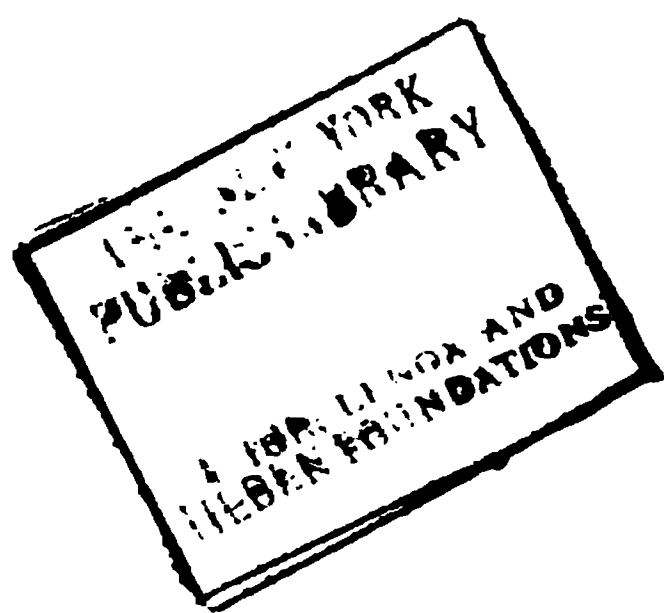


CALIGULA

child, and besides was an object of hatred to his grandfather.¹ Claudius, the brother of Germanicus, was thought to be mentally deficient; while Caius Cæsar (or Caligula as he was called), the son of Germanicus, was disliked by the Emperor simply because he had gained the favor of the people. On the other hand, he was unwilling to select a successor from outside of his family lest the name of Cæsar should fall from its eminence. He finally resolved that fortune should decide the question, and made a will constituting Tiberius Gemellus and Caligula his joint heirs and successors. But there can be no doubt that he knew full well what the result would be. Once when both were present he said to Caligula, "Thou shalt slay him and another shall slay thee." On another occasion, while commenting upon the natural cruelty and depravity which even as a youth Caligula was unable to conceal, the Emperor declared that Caius was "destined to be the ruin of himself and all mankind"; and that he (Tiberius) was "rearing a hydra for the people of Rome, and a Phaeton for all the world." Some historians have not scrupled to declare that it was on account of the vicious disposition of Caius that he was chosen by the Emperor to succeed him, so that after his own death a comparison might be made in favor of his memory when the Romans should be governed by a ruler yet more cruel and tyrannical than himself.

Upon the death of Tiberius, Caligula set out for Rome, and between the universal hatred of the deceased Emperor and the universal joy that a son of Germanicus was actually to sit upon the throne, his journey from Misenum was one long passage between altars, victims, lighted torches, and prodigious crowds of people, the latter trans-

¹ *Ante*, page 68.



CALIGULA

dations of many important cities now existing along the Rhine were the Roman fortresses established in this war by Drusus, who seems to have possessed unusual military genius. He met an untimely death in Germany, where he had been joined by Tiberius, the latter travelling on foot ahead of his brother's body all the way to Rome, where the dead prince was accorded a magnificent funeral, receiving the most extravagant honors at the hands of Augustus. The Senate, amongst various other honors, had in his lifetime conferred the cognomen of Germanicus upon him and his posterity. The memory of Drusus had always been revered by the Roman people, who cherished a strong persuasion that if his life had been spared, he would have restored liberty. How much of this was justified by his character, and how much is to be accounted for by hero-worship, is uncertain; but the fact undoubtedly accounts in no small measure for the extravagant hopes which were founded on the accession to power of his grandson Caligula.

But the character of Drusus and his beautiful wife Antonia, the grandparents of Caligula, the almost godlike virtues attributed to his father Germanicus, and the unselfish devotion and signal chastity (rare virtues, in those days, among the women of Rome) of his lion-hearted mother Agrippina, seem to have made no impress upon the nature of the third Emperor, who, starting as a sly, cruel, and vicious boy, developed into a perfect devil incarnate and ended as a veritable madman.

After his father's death in Syria¹ he returned to Rome with the widowed Agrippina, with whom he resided until her exile. Upon the imprisonment of his brothers Nero and Drusus he was removed to the house of his great-

¹ *Ante*, page 59.

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grandmother, Livia Augusta, with whom he lived until her death, and whose funeral oration he delivered in public before he had donned the *toga virilis*. After the death of the Augusta he lived with his grandmother Antonia, until, when about twenty years of age, he was summoned by the old Emperor to join him at Capri and there remained until the death of Tiberius—to which he was undoubtedly an accessory.

From the time of his mother's exile and the imprisonment of his brothers, he seems to have borne himself with the greatest circumspection, manifesting no concern for their sufferings and displaying no feeling whatever upon their death. In this way he escaped the fate of his brothers, and with the death of Sejanus he began to cherish hopes of succeeding Tiberius in the Empire. He at once commenced to insinuate himself into the graces of Macro, the prætorian prefect, by making a mistress of the latter's wife, whom he engaged by an oath in writing to marry when he should become Emperor. Nothing now remained to be accomplished but the death of Tiberius, and that in the course of nature must be close at hand. But the gods were a bit tardy towards the end, and in order not to disappoint too long an expectant world, it became necessary to expedite matters in the way which Tiberius himself had taught. To this Caligula had no more objection than he had manifested when the lives of his mother and brothers were in the balance. Tiberius was murdered; and then, the Senate having been convened for the purpose of setting aside the late Emperor's will, Caius Cæsar was immediately declared *Imperator*, and the Roman world went mad over the priceless blessings vouchsafed by the immortal gods.

The Emperor Caligula was tall and ill shaped. He had

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a large head scantily covered with hair, a broad forehead hollowed at the temples, with strongly knit brows and deep-set eyes. He was incapable of enduring fatigue, frequently yielding to a species of faintness which rendered him practically helpless for hours at a time. Both his constitutional weakness of body and the mental disorder from which he plainly suffered (of which latter he himself seems not to have been unconscious¹) were greatly aggravated by his continued inability to sleep more than three or four hours at a time. Even such sleep as he had was broken and frequently disturbed by distressing dreams; so that in sheer despair he sometimes passed almost the entire night walking about the palace and longing for the approach of day.

Notwithstanding his bodily weakness, he was fond of certain kinds of athletics, especially fencing and charioteering. He was constant in practising the former, and frequently drove his chariot in the various circuses. Like Nero, he was also extremely fond of singing and acting, and by occasionally joining in the singing of the tragedians and imitating the gestures of the actors during a performance at the theatre, set an example which the "divine artist" who followed him carried to an extreme by himself actually performing on the public stage.²

While it may perhaps be a question whether Caligula or Nero dishonored humanity the most, it is difficult in the annals of Roman history—or, for that matter, in the history of any so-called civilized people—to discover a ruler who displayed such a savage barbarity of temper as was manifested by Caligula. Of all forms of wickedness, deliberate and cold-blooded cruelty is the most unerring sign

¹ He frequently thought of retiring from Rome to "clear his mind."

² *Post*, page 134.

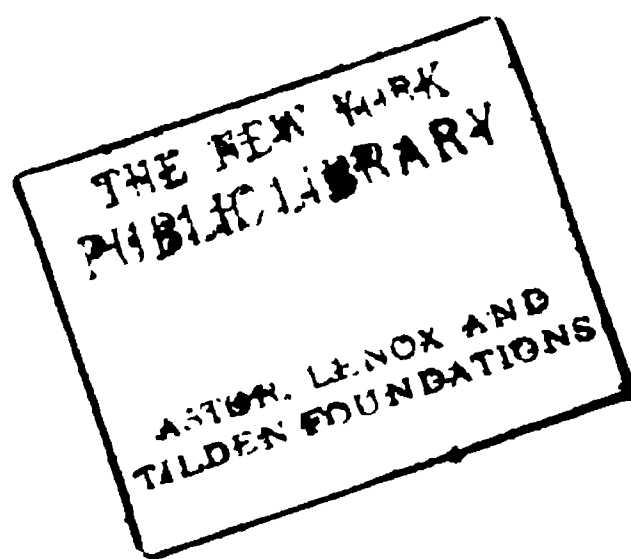
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

of an indwelling devil; and judging from this indication, if ever there were an instance where temporary reincarnation has been permitted a disembodied evil spirit, the fact exists in the case of Caius Cæsar. It is absolutely impossible to account for his ferocious deeds upon any other theory than that he had ultimately degenerated into a raging madman. The cold cruelty of Tiberius, the imbecile murderings of Claudius, and the revengeful wickedness of Nero pale into insignificance when compared with the malignant ferocity which marked the crimes of Caligula. Nero imitated, Commodus emulated, but neither equalled the son of the heroic Germanicus and the proudly virtuous Agrippina, who occupies a class by himself in the domain of monstrous cruelty.

In the devices of profuse expenditure, we are told that Caligula surpassed all the prodigals who ever lived. The dishes in the preparation of which rare and costly pearls were dissolved, the decks of vessels blazing with jewels, the squandering of enormous sums in defying all reason by attempting, in his architecture, to accomplish the concededly impossible, the broadcast scattering of gold from the top of the Basilica during successive days—in these and a thousand ways equally wild and extravagant he sought to illustrate his favorite remark that a “man ought to be a good economist—or an emperor.” Suetonius declares that in less than a year Caligula dissipated the entire treasure which had been amassed by Tiberius, amounting to two thousand seven hundred millions of sesterces (£27,000,000); and that after exhausting this immense sum he replenished his coffers by a course of the most unheard-of taxation and the most flagrant robbery and confiscation which the Roman world had ever known.

In the broad display of the Emperor Caligula's evil do-

ANTONIA MOTHER OF GERMANICUS



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ing, there yet crops out an occasional vein of absurdity, which, however, is doubtless more discernible to an amazed posterity than it was appreciated by the Romans of that day. Not content with the exalted titles of his imperial predecessors, he assumed the additional ones of "*The Pious*," "*The Dutiful*," and "*The Greatest and Best Cæsar*"; and being finally convinced that he far exceeded all other reigning sovereigns in grandeur and moral attributes as well, he seriously assumed divine functions, and standing between the statues of Castor and Pollux, which flanked the Forum entrance to the palace, he presented himself to be worshipped by the people, who gravely saluted him as *Jupiter Latialis*! Then followed the erection of a temple in honor of his divinity, containing a statue of gold, the exact image of himself, which was daily clothed to correspond with the garments which he wore.

In the days which immediately followed his theft of the imperial power, this grotesque and horrible masquerader, in the garb of *Tête d'Etat*, actually seems to have accomplished, or rather permitted the accomplishment of, some random acts of government; notably an attempt to restore to the people their ancient right of participating in the choice of magistrates, of which they had been deprived by Tiberius. But after the most careful and unbiassed study of his four years' reign, the one thought in regard to the history of Caligula which more than any other impresses itself upon us will always be, how utterly debased, disgraced, and degraded the people of Rome must have been to permit this frantic madman to live and rule over them for more than a single day.

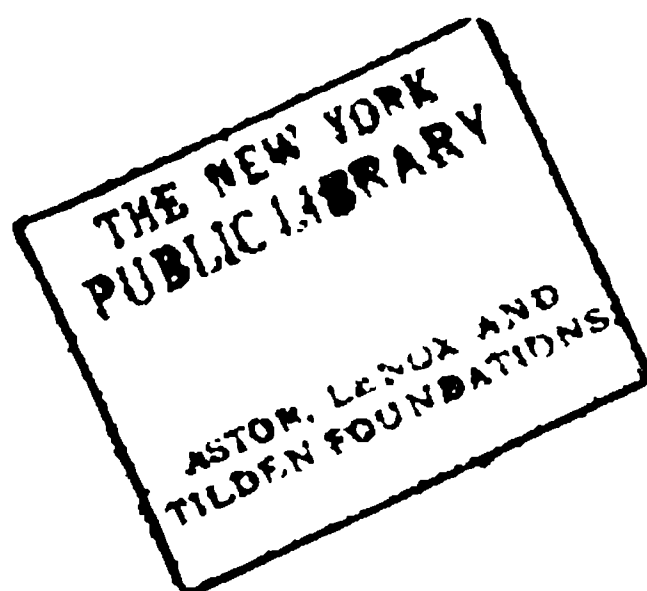
CHAPTER VII

THE FAMILY OF CALIGULA

THE marriages of Caligula constituted the most flagitious of the imperial offences against the purity and virtue, and the decency, even, of the family relation. Within a period of not more than six years he was married five times, and in each case except the first under circumstances of extreme depravity. "Whether in the marriage of his wives, in repudiating them or retaining them, he acted with greater infamy," says an ancient writer, "it is difficult to say." The effect of such an example upon Roman society was woful in the extreme. It was not an extravagant use of language on the part of a late English historian who remarked that during the reign of Caligula the licentiousness of the palace spread itself rapidly through his dominions, "contaminating whatever remained of the chastity of Roman women, or the honor of Roman families."

Shortly after taking up his residence with Tiberius at Capri, Caligula, then about twenty-two years of age, was married by the Emperor to Junia Claudia, the daughter of Marcus Silanus. Silanus was a man of illustrious descent, although for some time the family had been under a cloud on account of Decius Silanus, who had been one of the corrupters of the misguided Julia, granddaughter of Augustus, for which offence he had been banished by the first Emperor. Through the influence of his brother Marcus, who was preëminently distinguished for his eloquence, Decius had been allowed to return to Rome during the reign of Tiberius; the Emperor in granting consent, how-

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ever, declaring that he cherished all the resentment of Augustus against the offending young patrician, who was never afterwards allowed to attain honors or preference of any sort in the State. The incident is worthy of notice as illustrating the severe workings of the *Lex Julia*,¹ when once invoked, even among a race the most abandoned in its attitude towards the sanctity of the marital relation, and at the instance of a ruler who was himself the most brazen offender against the same.

The married life of Caligula and his first wife continued for nearly three years. Shortly before her husband became Emperor, Claudia died and thus happily escaped from unknown, although none the less certain, misery. Her sister, Junia Silana, who was the unfortunate wife of Caius Silius, the wretched consort of Messalina, after a life of misery and disgrace, for which the sins of others were largely responsible, managed to die a natural death at Tarentum.²

The father of Claudia and Silana, a virtuous old man, was the second victim to the Emperor's cruelty after his seizure of the throne, the death of Silanus following closely after that of Tiberius Gemellus.³ He was charged with a treasonable design against the Emperor, based upon his refusal to accompany the Court on a sailing excursion; the pretence being that he had remained at home to perfect his conspiracy. The fact was that the old man had declined to go merely from fear of sea-sickness and excused himself on this ground. But his death had been decreed. Julius

¹ Under the *Lex Julia* (so called because Augustus, the author of it, had been adopted by Julius Cæsar) the guilty parties, after the payment of heavy forfeitures and fines, were condemned to long or perpetual imprisonment in different islands. It was for a long time mistakenly believed that the Julian laws punished adultery with death.

² *Post*, page 144. ³ *Ante*, page 71.

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Græcinas (who was the father of Agricola), a man of inflexible integrity, and famous for his eloquence and philosophical learning,—for all of which he was accordingly hated by Caligula,—was ordered to accuse Silanus. Upon his refusal he was put to death; while Marcus, without further ado about forms, was driven to commit suicide with a razor.

Of course Caligula had never cherished the slightest intention of fulfilling his promise to marry Macro's wife, Ennia Nævia, when he should become Emperor. In order that there might remain no lingering doubt in her mind, and to demonstrate to his subjects a bit theatrically that a bad promise was better broken than kept, Ennia was speedily put to death, her husband, the brutal Macro, likewise meeting his just reward at the hands of the Emperor he had created. About the same time Caligula got hold of his cousin Ptolemy, the son of King Juba, who had married Selene (or Cleopatra), the daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and Ptolemy's relationship with the Emperor was speedily paid for with his life.

The second marriage of Caligula occurred after his succession, under the following circumstances. He was in attendance at the wedding of his friend Caius Piso with a beautiful woman named Livia Orestilla. After the ceremony and while the wedding feast was in progress, the Emperor, more and more impressed with the charms of Livia, sent a message to her husband commanding him on pain of death "not to touch the bride of Cæsar"; who was thereupon at once conveyed to the Palatine. On the day following the Emperor published a proclamation "that he had secured a wife as Romulus and Augustus had done"; referring in the one case to the rape of the Sabines, and in that of Augustus to his having taken Livia from Tiberius Nero.

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Caligula soon tired of his second wife, and after enjoying her imperial honors only a few days, Livia was dismissed from the palace. The rumor soon came to Caligula that she had rejoined her rightful husband; whereupon in a fit of mercy the Emperor banished them from Rome.

If the circumstances of his second marriage are thought to be shameful, the next matrimonial venture of this abomination in the imperial robes must be characterized as revolting. Shortly after his divorce of Livia, the Emperor annulled the marriage of his own sister Drusilla with Lucius Cassius,¹ and himself deliberately married her; conferring upon her all the titles and honors accorded to the office of Empress. With all its vices and all its crimes, Rome had never seen a spectacle like this; and in this horrible deed of the Emperor Caligula is found the crowning abomination in the mighty structure of wickedness reared by the house of Cæsar as an everlasting monument to its disgrace. The elder Livia had murdered her stepchildren; Tiberius had murdered his nephew and adopted son; the younger Livia had murdered her husband; while the younger Drusus had connived at the murder of his own brother. All these crimes against the sanctity of human life were the more terrible because perpetrated within the lines of the domestic circle. But the crowning infamy of Caligula was a crime committed against the sacredness of domestic purity, without the inviolate preservation of which civilization would crumble into dust, evolution would become involution, humanity would degenerate into beasthood. And within the memory or tradition even of Rome, that city where the criminal passions of the universe had exhausted

¹ This marriage had been arranged by Tiberius. Cassius was of a Roman plebeian family, but ancient and honorable. His history is untraced.

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themselves in the furious vortex of unbridled public indulgences, none but the immortal gods—and the Egyptians—were said to have done a thing like this.

But little recked Caligula for the opinion of Rome, or for that matter of the immortal gods either. Was he not Cæsar, and was not Cæsar “Divine”? He would make his sister Drusilla a goddess; the whole world should acknowledge her divinity also. This he actually pretended to accomplish; following which he declared that by will he had appointed her heiress both of his estate and the Empire.

Caligula had a friend Lepidus, who had become the associate of his most abandoned and nameless vices. Lepidus was a son of Julia, the granddaughter of Augustus, and a brother of Æmilia Lepida, who was first betrothed to the Emperor Claudius and afterwards, by her marriage with Appius Junius, brought the Cæsarean curse upon the unhappy family of Silanus.¹ He was thus cousin german to the Emperor and the Empress Drusilla, whose mother, Agrippina, and Julia were sisters. Besides receiving extravagant favors from Caligula, Lepidus was actually encouraged to expect the succession. It was none the less an unbounded surprise to Rome and to Lepidus as well, when the Emperor bestowed upon the latter his deified Empress-sister Drusilla in marriage. Men said that Caligula was mad. As for Drusilla, history is silent in regard to her attitude towards this series of matrimonial ventures, without parallel in the history of any other civilized nation. The writers all agree, however, that she survived this last marriage only a short time and that under the infliction of her death the Emperor was inconsolable. Public mourning was ordered for her, during the continuance of which it was a capital offence

¹ *Post*, page 159.

AGRIPPINA WIFE OF GERMANICUS

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

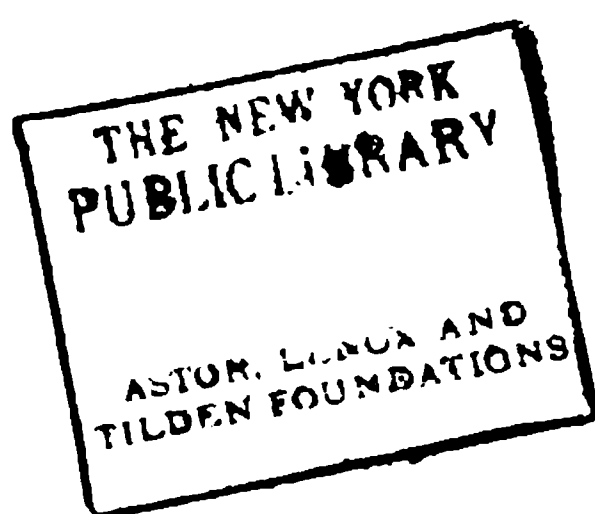
truthfully allege a precedent in the marriage of the first Emperor with the wife of Tiberius Nero.

Lollia maintained her imperial honors scarcely longer than the wife of Piso had, and her speedy dismissal by her august spouse was accompanied by an order neither to return to Regulus nor to remarry upon pain of death. The unhappy woman met the usual fate attending imperial alliances, in the succeeding reign.¹ Her husband, the consul, must have led a charmed life, having been a prominent figure in the reigns of four successive emperors, all of whom were given to shedding the blood of men high in authority. As consul, Regulus had executed the orders of the Emperor Tiberius for the arrest of the powerful Sejanus, who was at the time exercising all the powers of sovereignty and in command of all its defences. Joined with the exceptional courage which such an act evidenced, his commanding talents and fine tact enabled him to maintain his position throughout the sovereignty of both Caligula and Claudius (finally escaping death under Caligula, however, only by the sudden death of the Emperor himself) and well along into the reign of Nero, when he came to a peaceful end. Nero paid a remarkable tribute to his talents, honor, and probity. When the Augustians around his bed during a severe illness were indulging in the usual flatteries by lamenting that the Republic (?) would be undone if he died, Cæsar answered that "there was still one resource." Pressed for an explanation he said, "Memmius Regulus." But the death of Regulus was timely; a little later he too would undoubtedly have succumbed, as did the unspotted Thræsea, to the maddened Emperor's determination to destroy virtue itself.

History mentions no children born to Caligula until

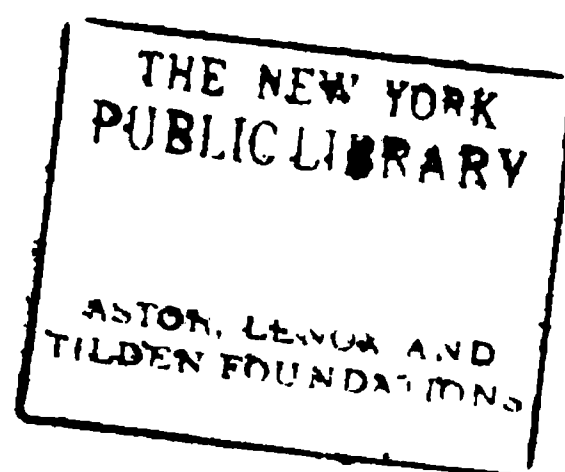
¹ *Post*, page 120.

AGRIPPINA WIFE OF GERMANICUS



THE FAMILY OF CALIGULA

his last marriage, which followed closely his divorce of Lollia Paulina, whose beauty and attractions had not equalled his expectations. As a compensation for this disappointment, to the surprise of his friends, or rather his slaves,—for by this time he had not a friend in the world, unless it was his horse,—the Emperor next married Milonia Cæsonia, a woman who possessed neither youth nor beauty, who was of the most disreputable character, and who was already the mother of three children, by a husband still living. For this abandoned creature Caligula now displayed the most unbounded affection, his extravagant treatment of Incitatus even suffering in comparison. Cæsonia is reported to have excelled all women of her time in an exquisite perception of sensuality, which largely accounts for her remarkable influence over the imperial madman, who once declared “that he was of a mind to put her to the torture to make her disclose her art.” But as well to posterity as to his contemporaries, his innate depravity of mind, increased by all the defects of education and the license of unlimited power, were together insufficient to account for the monstrous enormities which the Emperor displayed from this time on. The Court unhesitatingly accounted for them by declaring that Cæsonia had given him a philter, or so-called love potion, which had both enfeebled his constitution and, by occasioning a violent nervous disorder, induced a permanent affection of the brain. The ancient writers all testify to the frequent use of such philters, which were believed to operate upon the mind by a mysterious and sympathetic power; and it is perhaps only common charity to account in this way for some of the moral turpitude and frantic wickedness which Caligula displayed.



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legions.¹ Incensed by the suffering of Quintilia, whose fortitude and constancy alone preserved him and his associates in the plot from death, Chærea declared that he would postpone the deed no longer; for if further delayed some one else would kill Caligula, and he would thus lose the privilege of ridding the world of such a monster.

It was resolved to despatch him during the Palatine (or Circensian) games, which were about commencing. For three days Chærea watched for an opportunity. But warned by his previous suspicions and as well by various omens and portents of his approaching end, the Emperor was so constantly surrounded by the guards that it was impossible to approach him. On the fourth day of the games, however, the occasion presented itself. The Emperor, who was slightly indisposed while at the theatre, was prevailed upon by the conspirators to try the bath; and while passing through a low vaulted passage, in company with his uncle Claudius, Marcus Vinicius, his sister's husband, and a few others, Chærea struck him down, and he was despatched by the others as he lay screaming, "I am not dead." His death occurred on the twenty-fourth of January, 41 A. D., after he had lived twenty-nine years and reigned three years, ten months, and eight days. His body was carried privately into the Lamian Gardens, where after being half burned, it was carelessly covered with earth. It was disinterred by his sisters Julia and Agrippina, after their recall from banishment by the Emperor Claudius, and reduced to ashes.

After the death of Caligula, Chærea, according to Josephus, "was very uneasy that Caius's daughter and wife were still alive, and that all his family did not perish with

¹ *Annals*, i. 39.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

him, since whosoever was left of them must be left for the ruin of the city and of the laws." After discussion by the conspirators it was finally decided, although not unanimously, that Caligula's wife must die, and Julius Lupus, one of the tribunes, was sent to despatch her. Cæsonia was found lying by her husband's dead body, and met her fate bravely, stretching out her neck and bidding Lupus strike without fear. The young Drusilla was dashed against a wall, and the race of the "divine" Caius Cæsar was at an end.

CHAPTER VIII

CLAUDIUS CÆSAR, THE FOURTH EMPEROR

FROM 41 A. D. TO 54 A. D.

THE accession to the throne of Claudius Cæsar, the fourth Roman Emperor, was signalized by the last memorable effort of the Senate to reassume its ancient rights, of which it had been finally deprived nearly three-quarters of a century before.

Caligula had left neither descendant, son by adoption, nor even heir created by will. His immediate family had been completely annihilated—with the exception of Incitatus, who had been proposed by his master for no higher office than that of consul, and was therefore, of course, ineligible to the purple. Of his brothers and sisters all were dead except two of the latter, who had been banished for their crimes. The only surviving male descendant of Germanicus was Agrippina's son Nero, then only two years of age. Rubellius Plautus, a great-grandson of the Emperor Tiberius, was also a child of tender years, and no one had suggested the claims of the surviving male descendants of the Emperor Augustus in the fourth generation—the sons of Æmilia Lepida and Appius Junius Silanus. To be sure, there was Claudius—brother of Germanicus and uncle of the late Emperor. But Claudius had always been and still was a mere laughing-stock at the palace. He was considered by the Court as half-witted, and tradition has it that his own mother, the beautiful and sensible Antonia, used to say in speaking of any exceptionally stupid person, "He is nearly as great a fool as my Claudius." The mere fact that his having

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been passed over by his uncle, the Emperor Tiberius, when the latter selected Caligula for adoption, excited no comment whatever, is an indication that he occupied a small place in the attention of the Roman world. Present at the murder of his nephew, he fled and concealed himself immediately thereafter; and, under the prevailing excitement, to the patricians, at least, as to such as Claudius it was out of sight, out of mind.

So that the time seemed opportune and everything propitious for a last strike for liberty; and the Senate, arousing itself from its seven decades of slavish imbecility, prepared once more to assume the direction of affairs. The consuls immediately convoked an assembly in the Capitol, resolutions were adopted condemning the memory of the Cæsars, "Liberty" was selected as the new watchword, which was to be given to the cohorts, and during forty-eight hours the Senate, for almost the last time in its history, dared to act as "the independent chiefs of a free commonwealth."

"But while they deliberated," says Gibbon, "the prætorians had *resolved*. The stupid Claudius was already in their camp, invested with the imperial purple and prepared to support his election by arms. The dream of liberty was at an end; and the Senate awoke to all the horrors of inevitable servitude."

After the "virtuous slaughter" of Caligula, as Josephus happily terms it, all of his attendants fled in the greatest dismay. Among them was Claudius, who, beside himself with fright, ran into the palace adjoining the theatre where the assassination occurred, and concealed himself in an alcove behind some curtains. The news of the Emperor's death spread like wildfire, and the German guards, who were especially devoted to Caligula because of the

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CLAUDIUS CÆSAR

immense sums he had distributed among them, rushed with drawn swords into the theatre and thence overran the palace. Claudius was ignominiously pulled from his hiding-place, begging piteously for his life. But his character was too well known for him to be an object of suspicion in connection with the crime, and the guards foreseeing a possible struggle with the Senate, and appreciating the advantage of having on their side the last prince of the blood, disregarding his protestations, hurried him out of the palace and into the large open court, where they speedily assembled their companions by setting up a great shout: "This is a Germanicus;¹ let us make him our Emperor." And the trembling, half-witted old man, who was so weak from fright that the guards had been compelled to carry him out of doors, discovered to his great amazement that it was not his life, but to secure for him the throne of his ancestors, which the soldiers were seeking. He therefore now willingly accompanied the guards to their camp, where, assured that he should have the united support of the Celtic legion and the prætorian cohorts, he quietly awaited the successful outcome which the leaders promised, having agreed that when he became Emperor every legionary should have a sum of money equivalent to seven hundred and fifty dollars.

The populace of Rome were with the soldiers; indeed even among the senators themselves the sentiment was largely the same way. The conspirators had been animated by the motive of self-preservation, not by a principle of liberty. It was the person of the tyrant, not the imperial idea, against which the sword of Chærea had been raised. Nevertheless, from the fact that the debate in the assembly was prolonged during two entire days, it is appar-

¹ See Note 2, page 107.

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ent that there was still a considerable party in favor of reëstablishing the ancient form of government. But it was too late. The cruelty, licentiousness, and tyranny of the last two reigns, to which the people had slavishly submitted, had brought the inevitable result. Roman virtue was dead. The authority and influence which the Senate had formerly enjoyed were gone forever. The imperial idea, backed up by the sword of the legionary, had taken its place. Without the aid of the common people, it was absolutely impossible for a discredited assembly of the patricians, totally unprovided with resources, to reëstablish its independence and successfully proclaim public freedom. And when the clamor of the multitude was added to the open menaces which the prætorians began to utter, the debate weakened. Chærea and his companions were overborne, and upon the shoulders of the guard Claudius was at length carried triumphantly to the Capitol, where an obsequious Senate hailed him as Emperor, and Roman liberty had uttered its last sigh. This transaction, says one of the commentators of Suetonius, "laid the foundation of that military despotism which through many succeeding ages convulsed the Roman Empire"; and which, might as truthfully have been added, contributed largely to its final disintegration.

Tiberius Claudius Drusus was born at Lyons on the first day of August, 10 B. C., so that he was in his fifty-first year when he became Emperor. He was the second of the three children of Drusus, the younger brother of the Emperor Tiberius, and Antonia, the younger daughter of Mark Antony and the Emperor Augustus's sister Octavia. Germanicus was his elder brother and Livia, the wife of the Emperor Tiberius's son Drusus, was his sister. After the adoption of his elder brother into the Julian

CLAUDIUS CÆSAR

family,¹ he assumed the cognomen of Germanicus, which by a decree of the Senate in the lifetime of his father Drusus had been bestowed upon him and his posterity. His ancestry has been considered in a former chapter.²

Claudius—for thus he has been invariably called—was an infant at the time of his father's death; and as in early youth he was apparently both of a weak constitution and deficient in intellect, in the glory of his elder brother's promise and popularity he was pushed to one side, and thereafter treated by the entire Court—including, as we are told, even his own mother—with a contempt which would have amounted to scorn if it had not been so careless. It is undoubtedly to this fact alone that Claudius so long escaped the fate which overwhelmed every other member of his immediate family and so many of his kindred as well. Nobody thought of killing him for the simple reason that nobody thought of him at all, and but for his unexpected exposure to the imperial disease he would doubtless have come to a peaceful end, and thus attained a unique place in history as the only male Cæsar following Augustus who escaped a violent death.

For a long time his education was neglected entirely, and but for the Emperor Augustus he might never have received any other teaching than that of the mule driver who had been selected for his tutor “on purpose to correct him severely on every trifling occasion.” His penetrating grandfather discerned in the unhappy boy something more than the fool and even idiot which his family considered him; although in the end Augustus himself apparently came to the conclusion that (to use his own expression in a letter to the Empress Livia) Claudius was “below par and deficient in body and mind”; for he in-

¹ *Ante*, page 43. ² Chapter v. page 57.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

vested him with no other honor than the augural priesthood. The Emperor Tiberius plainly cherished the same opinion; for he refused his nephew's request for preferment in the State, permitting him to have merely the honorary appendages of the consulship. In the end, however, Claudius to a considerable extent outgrew his complaints, and actually seems to have attained distinction as a scholar and writer. But his spirits never fully recovered from the effects of both disease and punishment, while to the extreme timidity incident to his sickly constitution were afterwards added those vices which were the natural consequence of the indolence to which he resigned himself when convinced that he was destined to no advancement.

Tiberius made some tardy show of justice towards Claudius by leaving him a legacy of two millions of sesterces, and also in his will expressly recommending "the brother of Germanicus to the armies, the Senate, and people of Rome." The people now began to treat him more kindly, so that finally Caligula at the outset of his reign desiring to win popularity and support in the easiest possible way, made his uncle consul; although, as it proved, by accepting the olive branch at so late a day from a member of his family, Claudius was only opening the door to additional insults, considerable personal danger, and the loss of almost his entire estate, of which he was shortly robbed by the Emperor. Once again he became the butt and laughing-stock of the imperial parasites, and was speedily lapsing into his old condition of degradation and almost imbecility, when by a surprising turn of circumstances, he who by the first Emperor was thought to be unworthy of any public trust, himself attained the purple and assumed the cognomen of Cæsar. And while for some time after his succession, owing, perhaps, to the novelty of

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his position, joined to the good fortune of having wise counsellors, he displayed such prudence and sagacity as to amaze all who had known him, it has been remarked as nevertheless difficult to assign any other motive for the choice of Claudius as Emperor than that which the army professed—"His relationship to the whole family of Cæsars." The commencement of his reign of course demanded a libation of blood. And while Lupus, the slayer of Cæsonia, is entitled to no tears, it is sad to read that the brave Chærea was punished for his righteous crime. But such sacrifices were in those days considered only the ordinary and indispensable precautions for the new Emperor's own safety; and Claudius destroyed their harshness with the vast majority of his subjects by immediately thereafter passing an act of perpetual oblivion and pardon for everything which had been said and done. Even Valerius Asiaticus, who, when asked after Caligula was stricken down who it was had done it, had replied, "Would to God I had been the man!"—even he was unmolested. And posterity must affirm that "the half-witted Claudius" commenced his reign more like a human being, with an accountable soul, than any other Emperor of his house.

The Emperor Claudius was tall and not ill formed; but from his rickety constitution his knees were weak, and his gait was consequently awkward and shambling. Although there may be a question whether his mental infirmity proceeded from inheritance or a severe illness which occurred in his childhood, from the developments of his history it seems highly probable that but for the contemptuous and abusive treatment received in early life he might have largely outgrown his weaknesses, which, yielding readily to the evil persuasions of Messalina, ultimately led him into dissolute and sanguinary courses, end-

CHAPTER IX

THE FAMILY OF CLAUDIUS

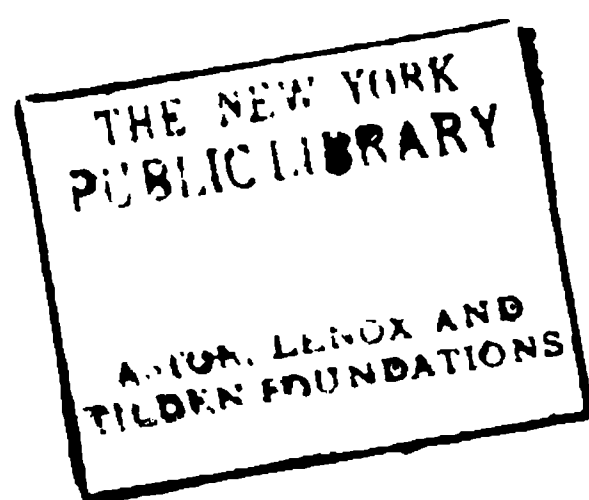
AT the time of his accession the Emperor Claudius had been married five times and four children had been born to him; while a fifth child, the ill-fated Britannicus, was born twenty days after his father ascended the throne (February 13, 41 A. D.) and came to his death at the hands of his cousin, the Emperor's successor, some fifteen years later.

Claudius first married—or perhaps only became betrothed to—Æmilia Lepida, the only daughter of his cousin Julia,¹ the granddaughter of Augustus, and Lucius Æmilius Paulus, grandnephew of the triumvir Lepidus. At the time of his betrothal to Æmilia, Claudius was entirely dependent upon his uncle for the most ordinary consideration;² and when shortly afterwards Augustus became incensed by the conduct of Julia (or possibly that of Paulus, who had engaged in a conspiracy against the Emperor), the betrothal or marriage, whichever it was, with Æmilia was abruptly broken off. Not long after this disappointment he married Livia Medullina, a beautiful young lady of high extraction, but only to have the cup dashed from his lips a second time, as Livia expired suddenly on her wedding day.

His next venture, although more successful at the outset, in the end brought him more bitterness than either of the others. Plautia Urgulanilla, who became his third wife, was the daughter of a brave soldier, who had at-

¹ Julia was the daughter of Augustus's daughter Julia and Agrippa. *Ante*, page 39. ² *Ante*, page 99.

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tained the honor of a triumph; and to the unbounded delight of Claudius she bore him a son, who was called Drusus. But the happiness of Claudius was short-lived. Drusus, while still very young, was playing one day at Pompeii, and, it is said, while tossing something into the air, caught it in his mouth and was choked to death. Only a few days before he had been betrothed by Tiberius to one of Sejanus's daughters;¹ which seems a just occasion of surprise to one of the ancient writers that this Drusus also should have been considered by certain other authors as one of the victims of Sejanus. However this may be, for any scion of the house of Cæsar, to lose his life was the only way of saving it, and the death of Drusus at a tender age ought not to have been deplored. Not long afterwards his mother, Plautia, was suspected by her lord of unfaithfulness and of having been concerned in a murder (which latter was of course entirely too shocking for the delicate sensibility of a Cæsar), and she ~~was~~ thereupon "repudiated with infamy"—whatever may ~~be implied in~~ the phrase. Plautia had another child, a daughter named Claudia. She was five months old when her mother was driven from the palace, and Claudius, ~~disclaiming her paternity,~~ ordered that she be cast naked at her mother's door.

One might think that by this time Claudius would have been somewhat sobered by his matrimonial experiences; but encouraging himself perhaps with the assertion of Socrates that whether a man married or not he was bound to regret it, he speedily selected a fourth wife in the person of Ælia Pætina, a daughter of the Tuberonian family and whose father was a man of consular rank. Pætina remained his wife long enough to bear him a daughter, who was called Antonia, after the mother of Claudius, and

¹ *Ante*, page 66.

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whose end was quite as wretched as might be expected, in view of the events which ensued. After being twice married, and witnessing the murder of both husbands, one at the hands of her father¹ and the other a victim to Nero's cruelty,² she herself succumbed to the rage of the latter, upon her refusal to marry him, after the death of Poppæa.³

Pætina having been divorced upon grounds so slight that in explaining her repudiation the ancient writers speak only of the Emperor's "disgust" for his wife, Claudius now took a step which ultimately stained his hands with blood and his character with infamy, bringing to him finally shame beyond measure, and to the Roman people such oppression and injustice as made them speedily forget the mildness and almost excellence—comparatively speaking—which characterized the earlier part of his reign.

Antonia, the mother of Claudius, had an elder sister of the same name,⁴ who had married Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus and become the mother of three children. One of them, a son, married Agrippina, the niece of Claudius and sister of Caligula, who with her sister Julia, upon the accession of Claudius, was recalled by him from the exile imposed upon them by their brother, the former Emperor.⁵ The only child of this marriage was Nero, afterwards Emperor; and it would not be strange if nature had exhausted itself in the production of such a monster as this child afterwards showed himself.

The other two children of L. Domitius and the elder Antonia were daughters, each bearing the name of Domitia Lepida. It has been a common mistake with modern

¹ *Post*, page 113. ² *Post*, page 148. ³ *Post*, page 154. ⁴ See page 108.

⁵ *Ante*, page 88.

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historians and others who have written about this period of Roman history to consider that Nero's father had only one sister.¹ The frequent carelessness and occasional obscurity of the ancient writers are to some extent responsible for the mistakes and confusion which have existed in regard to the two Lepidas. But the main difficulty, as well in tracing descent through the female line as in occasionally distinguishing between sisters, lies in the fact that the Roman women bore no distinctive prænomen;² which, by the way, is terribly significant of another fact, perhaps not fully proven, although highly probable,—that the horrible practice of exposure and infanticide, enjoined by the wise Solon and approved by the gentle Plutarch, had previously been, if it was not still, prevalent among the

¹ In *Darkness and Dawn* Canon Farrar speaks of "Domitia Lepida, the mother of the Empress Messalina, and the former wife of Crispus Passienus"; whereas the mother of Messalina and the wife of Passienus, the orator, were distinct persons. See next page.

² To mark the different *gentes* and *familiæ*, and to distinguish the individuals of the same family, the Romans had commonly three names, the *prænomen*, the *nomen*, and the *cognomen*.

The *prænomen* was put first and marked the *individual*, and was usually written with one letter: *A.* for *Aulus*; *C.* for *Caius*; *M.* for *Marcus*.

The *nomen* followed the prænomen and indicated the *gens*. It usually ended in *ius*; as *Julius*, *Cornelius*, *Domitius* (changing to *Julia*, *Cornelia*, and *Domitia* in case of females).

The *cognomen* came last and marked the *familia*; as *Cæsar*, *Nero*, *Scipio*. Some *gentes*, however, appear to have had no cognomen, or surname; for example, *Caius Marius*, *Marcus Agrippa*.

Occasionally there was a fourth name, called the *agnomen* (but sometimes also spoken of as cognomen), which was added to commemorate an illustrious action or remarkable event. Thus on account of his memorable victories in Germany, *Germanicus* was added to the nomen of the brother of Tiberius, so that he was finally called *Drusus Germanicus*; in the same way, Publius Cornelius Scipio *Africanus*, from his exploit at Carthage.

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Romans.¹ But whatever the reason therefor, the fact existed that an individual name was not usually bestowed upon the female child, who was distinguished merely by an adaptation to her sex of the nomen of her father or mother, or of that which marked the *gens* of some other ancestor, or collateral relative. Thus the frequency of the name *Julia* in the family of Cæsar, which belonged to the *Gens Julius*; the name of *Agrippina*, in the posterity of Agrippa; the two *Octavias*, sisters of the Emperor Augustus (Octavius);² Mark Antony's two daughters, the elder and younger Antonia, who were the first Emperor's nieces,³ and the sisters whose names introduced this digression, the two Lepidas, who were grandnieces of Augustus.

The eldest of these daughters of Antonia and L. Domitius was usually called by the second name, *Lepida*, and hereafter will be referred to under this name only. The younger daughter, who married Crispus Passienus, is invariably mentioned by her full name, Domitia Lepida, and may thus readily be distinguished from her more brilliant and notorious sister.

Lepida married M. Valerius Messala Barbatus, and became the mother of Messalina, who lived to become one

¹ Positive as well as indirect testimony on this point is found in Dion Cassius, Tertullian, and Tacitus. The destruction of Claudia, the infant daughter of Claudius and Plautia, seems to have been practically a case of exposure. *Ante*, page 105.

² Even Plutarch falls into an error in connection with the two Octavias. He says Mark Antony married Octavia *Major*, who was only half-sister to Augustus, and not of the blood of Cæsar; whereas it was the *younger* Octavia, daughter of Atia and own sister to Augustus, whose marriage with the triumvir sealed the confederacy. *Ante*, page 21.

³ Tacitus says that the younger Antonia was the grandmother of Nero; whereas all the other writers agree that it was Antonia *Major*.

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time she did not take the trouble to go to Claudius, but herself poisoned Vinicius.

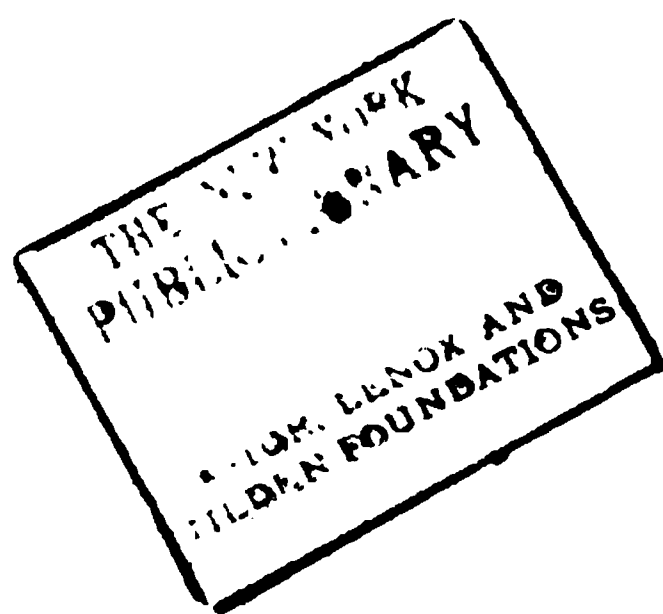
Claudius had betrothed his daughter Octavia to Lucius Silanus, the second son of his first wife, Æmilia Lepida (the great-granddaughter of Augustus), by Appius Junius Silanus, whom she had married after Claudius divorced her. In order to further strengthen her position the Empress, whose father had died, induced her husband to recall Appius Junius (whose wife Æmilia also was dead), who was Governor of Spain at the time, and compel him to marry her mother Lepida.¹ But it was not long before Silanus likewise incurred her displeasure and she resolved to get rid of him. With the aid of her secretary, it was readily accomplished. Before daybreak one morning Narcissus burst into the Emperor's bedchamber, and with a great assumption of fright, told Claudius that he had dreamed that Appius Silanus had murdered him. Upon this, Messalina, affecting great surprise, declared that she too had dreamed that her husband had been slain by Appius. At this juncture word came that Appius had come to see the Emperor—orders having been given him at the instance of the conspirators to be at the palace at that time. The truth of the dream was thus confirmed and Appius was at once put to death, Claudius on the following day acknowledging to the Senate his great obligation to Narcissus and the Empress for watching over him even while he slept.

Appius left five children by Æmilia Lepida. Of these great-great-grandchildren of Augustus, one son was poisoned and another driven to suicide by Agrippina, the sixth wife of Claudius;² one daughter was exiled by

¹ Silanus thus had the distinction of twice marrying into the Julian family.

² *Post*, pages 137 and 138.

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Claudius,¹ and the remaining son and daughter were respectively driven to suicide and exiled by the Emperor Nero.² The younger Silanus, only grandson of Appius Junius and the last surviving male descendant of the divine Augustus, was also put to death by Nero.³

The Emperor had given in marriage his daughter Antonia, the child of his fourth wife, Pætina, to Cneius Pompey, a descendant of the triumvir. Besides permitting his son-in-law to reassume the cognomen of Magnus, or Great, which had been taken from him by Caligula, Pompey had been loaded with honors by the Emperor, who treated him—and as well Cornelius Sylla, who became Antonia's second husband—as Augustus did the young princes; among other things allowing them to stand for high offices five years before the age prescribed by law. But all this favor and magnificence did not save Pompey. Guilty of the crime of displeasing Messalina, without any form of proceeding to establish an actual offence, he was stabbed in bed by the orders of Claudius. Crassus Frugi, his father, and Scribonia, his mother, perished with him. Their nobility is said to have been their crime. Crassus was certainly not feared for his genius. As Crévier says, "He resembled Claudius perfectly in his stupidity and was in that respect as worthy to succeed him as he was incapable of coveting his post."

Antonia left no children either by Pompey or Sylla. Both she and her second husband were murdered by Nero.⁴

The mutilated text of the eleventh book of the "Annals," which begins abruptly in the seventh year of the reign of Claudius (the history of the six preceding years

¹ *Post*, page 119.

² *Post*, page 138.

³ *Post*, page 158.

⁴ *Post*, pages 148 and 154.

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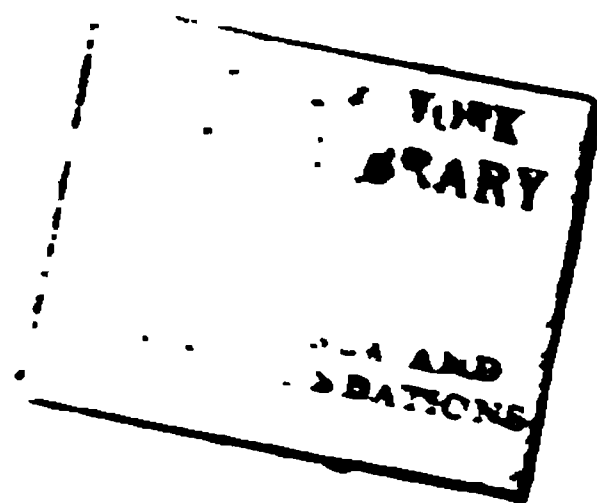
being lost), informs us that Messalina was bent upon the ruin of Valerius Asiaticus, and that "as she coveted his fine gardens, commenced by Lucullus, but carried out on an extended scale and adorned in a style of unexampled magnificence by himself, she suborned Suilius to accuse him."

Valerius was the brave consul who publicly proclaimed regret that he had not had the honor of slaying Caligula. He was now dragged in chains to Rome, denied a hearing before the Senate, and tried privately in the presence of Messalina. He defended himself so eloquently that the Emperor was greatly moved and even Messalina is said to have shed tears. Asiaticus was finally granted the favor of choosing the mode of his death. After declaring that it would have been less ignominious to die by the dark artifices of Tiberius or the fury of Caligula than thus to fall by the base devices of a woman, he opened his veins, the usual method of an enforced suicide among the elegant, agreeable, and civilized Roman citizens. The coveted gardens belonged to the Empress at last; and it was there that Nemesis overtook her.

Common decency forbids our coming within sight or sound of the personal life of Messalina, whose murders were merely the occasional staccato notes in a continued theme of vice, which was now approaching the last tragic flourish. Soon after the death of Asiaticus she formed a passionate attachment for Caius Silius, then consul-elect, who is said to have been the handsomest man in Rome. Silius was married to Junia Silana, the sister of Caligula's first wife and daughter of the murdered Silanus.¹ Messalina compelled Silius to divorce the unhappy Junia, and after loading the former with presents and honors and otherwise deporting herself so as to scandalize even her

¹ *Ante*, page 83.

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most scandalous associates, she finally broke down the last barriers, and during the absence of Claudius at Ostia, where he was assisting at a sacrifice, the unaccountable Empress publicly celebrated her nuptials with Silius, with all the usual solemnities. "I am aware," says Tacitus with great ingenuousness, "that it will appear fabulous that any human beings should have exhibited such recklessness of consequences. But I would not dress up my narrative with fictions to give it an air of marvel rather than relate what has been stated to me, or written by my seniors."¹

In the midst of the orgies which attended the marriage ceremonies, a sort of court buffoon who had climbed a tree, upon being asked what he saw, replied, "a terrible storm coming up from Ostia." The guilty parties had scarcely recovered from the shock occasioned by this prophetic remark when couriers arrived to say that the Emperor was actually coming. For the first time Messalina seemed to realize the enormity of her offence. In the general panic which ensued the wretched woman fled to her beautiful gardens of Lucullus, where the murder of their last owner was now to be expiated, and there, abandoned by every one except her mother, she lay grovelling on the earth, awaiting the expected message from her wrathful husband. Curious to relate, the Emperor seemed inclined to overcome his resentment, and instead of ordering Messalina's immediate execution, directed that on the next day she should attend and plead her cause. Whereupon Narcissus, fearing that the whole thing might recoil upon himself, rushed out and directed the tribune on duty to "despatch the execution by the Emperor's command."

It is said that Lepida had not lived in harmony with Messalina during the latter's prosperity, but now, over-

¹ *Annals*, xi. 27.

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enormous fortune which thus came into her possession, reinforced by her striking beauty, her great ability, unbending will, and utter unscrupulousness in the employment of means to accomplish ends the most trivial, she easily became one of the most powerful, most dreaded, and most terrible characters in Rome. Posterity may fairly accord to her a position at the very apex of wickedness, for in cruelty and deliberate evil-doing, if not in abandoned profligacy, she certainly surpassed Messalina, whose name has become proverbial for similar vices. It would be impossible to overestimate the curse which this woman must have brought upon Roman society but for the fact that its degeneration was already so extreme. And yet her ending was so tragic—the crime of her death was so terrible, so monstrous—that pity tempers judgment even in her case, and in thinking of her we are fain again to repeat the wonderful and divinely beautiful words of Him who had preached even while she was in the full flush of her wicked life: “He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone.”

Aided by the arts and blandishments of Agrippina, the arguments of the Emperor’s treasurer won the day, the weak resistance urged by the poor old dotard on the ground of near relationship being readily overcome by procuring from the Senate a decree legalizing marriages of this character.¹ Within twenty-four hours thereafter the marriage was consummated and the last dark chapter in the Emperor’s life commenced.

By her first husband Agrippina had a son named Domitian, who was a youth of about thirteen at the time of his

¹ Until quite recently the statute law of the State of New York permitted—or at least did not prohibit—marriages between nephews and aunts, uncles and nieces.

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come with compassion for the extreme necessity of her daughter, the mother “persuaded her not to await the execution; the course of her life was run, and her only object now should be to die becomingly.” In the midst of her mother’s entreaties, her own tears and lamentations, and the upbraidings of a slave for her cowardice, the centurions arrived. She at last summoned courage to inflict upon herself a few feeble strokes of the dagger, when the sword of the tribune pierced her heart. In the entire range of ancient literature there can be found no more graphic description of the degraded condition of society under the Cæsars than in the concluding words of the most picturesque writer of ancient history in relating the death of Messalina: “Tidings were then carried to Claudius that ‘Messalina was no more,’ without distinguishing whether by her own or another’s hand; neither did he inquire, but called for a cup of wine, and proceeded in the usual ceremonies of the feast; nor did he indeed during the following days manifest any symptom of disgust or joy, of resentment or sorrow, nor in short of any human affection; not when he beheld the accusers of his wife exulting at her death; not when he looked upon her mourning children. The Senate aided in effacing her from his memory by decreeing ‘that from all public and private places her name should be rased and her images removed.’”¹

In his first sober moments following the death of Messalina, when the full sense of his ignominy and shame swept over him, the Emperor summoned his prætorians and declared that having been so unhappy in his union, he was resolved never to marry again; “and if I should,” he concluded, “I give you leave to stab me.” And then, with his usual vacillation and acting still from the pur-

¹ *Annals*, xi. 38.

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poseless motive which prompted him to yield to the latest emotion as the invariable rule of conduct, he immediately turned his attention to securing another wife. The fact precipitated an ardent contest between the ladies of the Court, each of whom was ambitious for the exalted position, although none could have been unaware that a violent death was the almost inevitable consequence of an alliance with the imperial family. Unable himself to decide between the rival claimants, the Emperor requested his ministers to deliberate upon the matter and advise him. Each of the favorites was naturally eager to advance his own interests by recommending the successful lady, who would thereupon become more or less indebted to him for her elevation. Narcissus proposed that Claudius should espouse his former wife Pætina, by whom he had a daughter still living; Callistus urged that the wealthy Lollia Paulina, one of the Emperor Caligula's divorced wives, should be chosen; while Pallas startled the whole Court, including even the aimless and dull-witted Claudius himself, by proposing a marriage with Agrippina, the only surviving daughter of Germanicus, and consequently the Emperor's own niece.

This Agrippina, it will be remembered, had been exiled with her sister Julia, in the reign of Caligula, they having incurred the displeasure of their imperial brother. During the period of her exile, her first husband, the brother of the two Lepidas, had died, and soon after her recall by Claudius she had married a celebrated orator named Crispus Passienus, who had been twice consul. Passienus, who was very rich, had the imprudence to inform his wife that he had made a will constituting her his heiress. Having thus, as his wife concluded, fulfilled his destiny, she immediately disposed of him by poison, and through the

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the State, more nearly the equal of Britannicus, the heir apparent. In this she found ready assistance from all who, having contributed to the death of Messalina, dreaded the ultimate vengeance of her son. The Senate approved, the weak-minded Emperor also consented, and Nero and the gentle Octavia, whose wishes were of course not consulted, were betrothed. Slowly but surely the unconscious Emperor was preparing for the extermination of his family.

Thus far in the accomplishment of her ends the Empress had proceeded with great caution, feeling her way carefully and refraining entirely from the use of violence. But she was now so firmly established that it seemed perfectly safe to indulge a little in the open gratification of her cruel nature, and a victim had already been selected. She had never forgiven Lollia Paulina for jeopardizing her own ambitions by aspiring to marry Claudius, and her hatred, always implacable, was in this instance intensified by both jealousy and covetousness, her defeated rival being immensely rich. Lollia's fortune was enormous, Pliny declaring that he had seen her on an ordinary occasion wearing jewels valued at forty millions of sesterces (£400,000). As the sentence of banishment implied forfeiture, this immense fortune was ultimately enjoyed by Agrippina. Witnesses were suborned charging Lollia with consulting magicians and oracles concerning her ambitious views. As usual, no hearing was granted the accused, the Emperor recommending to the Senate that she should be banished. This sentence was immediately carried into effect; but Agrippina was not satisfied until her hated rival was killed and her head produced for inspection by the first lady in the State, who wished to establish its identity by an examination of the teeth.

Having thus refreshed herself, Agrippina returned to her

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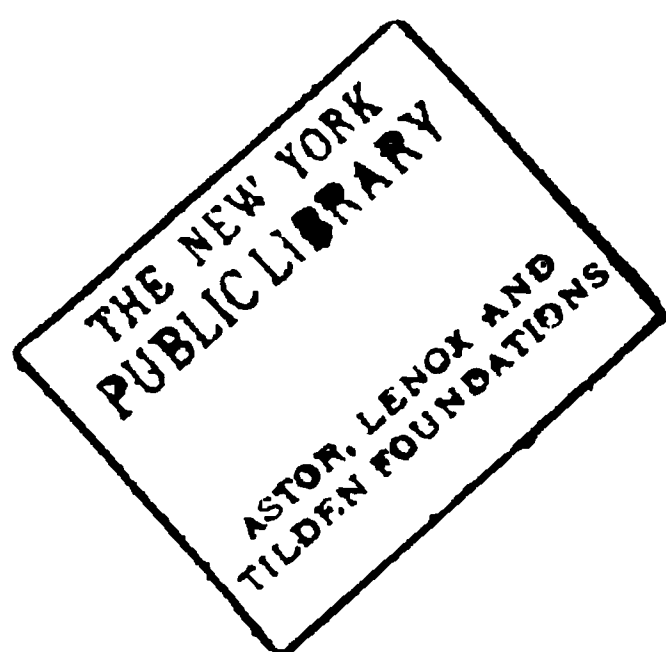
original purposes with renewed energy, her next aim being to secure the formal adoption of her son by the Emperor. Through the influence of her corrupt associate, the detestable Pallas, this important step was also accomplished. The foolish Emperor yielded to the hollow arguments advanced by his minister: that the adoption was desirable to provide for the exigency of the commonwealth and support the infancy of Britannicus with a collateral stay; that Tiberius notwithstanding he had a son of his own adopted Germanicus, the deified Augustus likewise, though possessed of grandsons upon whom to rely, having raised to power the sons of his wife. With the consent of Claudius a law was enacted decreeing the adoption of Domitius into the Claudian family under the name of Nero—the title of Augusta being at the same time conferred upon his mother. The adoption of Nero was said to have been the first in the Claudian family in over two hundred years. It proved to be the last also, for by it the Emperor Claudius sealed the doom of his race. His own death had already been decided upon, while the ill-fated Britannicus, who was two years younger than his adoptive brother, was not long to survive his murdered father.

The accession of Nero was now assured, the death of Claudius alone interposing as the last obstacle to the triumphant policy of the Empress. How feeble the barrier was none knew better than Agrippina herself; and perhaps with a view of acquiring a proper state of mind in which to accomplish its removal, she determined upon a little preliminary exercise of her powers. This time the victim was of the blood of Cæsar, in the person of Lepida, mother of the late Empress, cousin german to Claudius, and aunt of Nero, being one of the two sisters of the latter's father. For Lepida the Empress had long cher-

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ished a bitter jealousy and hatred. During the exile of the latter, in the reign of Caligula, her son Nero had found a home with his aunt, and ever since the dawn of his new fortunes there had been a silent but none the less powerful contention between the two women to acquire the first position in his confidence and regard. An attempt to secure the ascendancy over a son for whom her own consummate art alone had ensured the prize, would in itself have been sufficient to arouse all the tiger-like instincts of Agrippina. But her hatred was intensified—and for the same reason reciprocated by the other—because of the striking similarity in both the position and character of the two women. Of the same degree of nobility, equally beautiful, almost equally rich, of about the same age, each of them hot and violent in temper, their reputations alike ruined and lost, and competitors in vice, as in everything else, Agrippina exceeded her rival alone in the added power of her position in the imperial household. With regard to Nero, on the other hand, the advantage seems to have been with Lepida, who had gained his confidence in early youth, while his mother was in exile, by liberal if not actually caressing and flattering treatment; while from Agrippina he had until recently received only sternness and threats. But the crafty Agrippina had been to the oracle. She knew herself. In the consciousness of her power she did not lose sight of her weakness, and, like every successful leader, realized the wisdom of averting a threatened danger before it should become uncontrollable. She was at this moment the stronger; the ascendancy of her rival over Nero profited Lepida nothing as long as the young prince was himself dependent. But as it might easily be different when he should actually become Cæsar, the conclusion was obvious that in order to destroy the

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one existing menace to her dream of absolute power, a dominion which was to be exercised through control of the future Emperor, her rival must be crushed before Nero came to the throne. As in the case of the last victim, the destruction of Lepida was accomplished through an accusation of magic—against which to the mind of the shivering Claudius there never could be any answer; which is doubtless the reason why sentence was in such cases pronounced by him without opportunity for defence on the part of the accused. Lepida was condemned to death, her great estate, like that of Lollia, going to swell the already immense fortune which the murder of her second husband had brought to the Empress, whose wealth was now not far short of the imperial treasure itself. Domitia Lepida, her remaining sister-in-law, and who had also been the first wife of Passienus, although an object of jealousy to the Empress, escaped for the present, and ultimately managed to keep out of Agrippina's reach, but only to perish miserably at the hand of Nero.¹

Her rivals overthrown, her vengeance satisfied, at least temporarily, the continuance of her power assured, and every detail of her plan having been accomplished precisely as arranged, Agrippina calmly approached the last of her labors—this time one of pure love; for was not a place among the immortal gods for her cherished husband the immediate object and her only son to be the direct beneficiary?

She had long accustomed herself to the thought of poisoning her husband, and after careful deliberation had decided to employ an agent which should be instantaneous in its operation, in order that there might be at once neither miscarriage nor the opportunity for discovery or

¹ *Post*, page 148.

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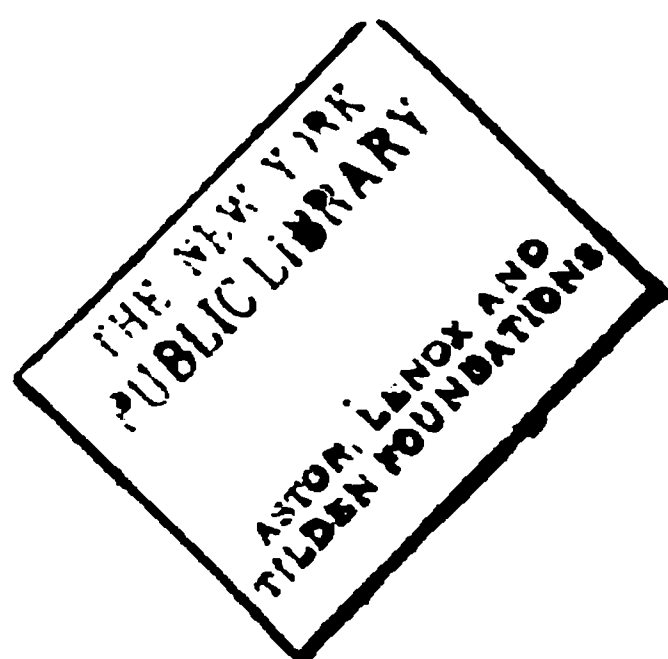
Cneius Domitius Ahenobarbus, was a masterful overbearing soldier, of whom the orator Crassus said, "No wonder he has a brazen beard whose face is of iron and whose heart is lead." The next Cneius, son of the last-mentioned, was a man of sullen temper and inconstant character, who fell at Pharsalia after fighting on both sides in the great contest for the empire of the world. His son, also called Cneius, after narrowly escaping the general condemnation which followed the death of the great Cæsar, lived to fill the highest offices under the Emperor Augustus. His son Domitius, the grandfather of Nero, was a man of great arrogance, prodigality, and cruelty, and it is said that he displayed such barbarity in his gladiatorial and wild beast shows, which occurred both in the circus and the various wards of the city, that Augustus was compelled to restrain him by public edict.

The cruel disposition of his grandfather manifested itself in the Emperor's father, Cneius Domitius, who is described as "a man of execrable character in every part of his life." He once killed one of his freedmen for refusing to drink as much as he ordered him, and at another time, while driving in the Appian Way, purposely whipped up his horses and crushed a poor boy under his chariot. Shortly before the death of the Emperor Tiberius, Cneius was accused of treason, adulteries, and incest with his sister Lepida (the mother of Messalina), but escaped in the distraction of the next Emperor's succession, and soon after died. The character of his wife, Agrippina, has been sufficiently indicated in the preceding chapter.¹

Every element of character was thus apparently present in the ancestry of Nero, destined to become for all ages the personification of monstrous vice and crime. Among

¹ *Ante*, page 117.

MESSALINA



NERO

his ancestors were those who had controlled the destinies of the civilized world; whose mighty deeds had carried the power of the Roman arms among distant barbarous nations, impressing upon them a character which after the lapse of so many centuries is still discernible; whose vices had dug the graves of entire dynasties; whose virtues had been embalmed in the memories which even yet survive to persuade us that all Roman women were not vile and all Roman men utterly corrupt. Augustus, the deified Emperor; Mark Antony, the splendid sacrifice of manhood upon the altar of a sensual attraction; Agrippa, the great minister of the wonderful Augustan era; Drusus Germanicus, and his son, the great popular hero; the long lines of the Claudii and the Domitii, soldiers and statesmen of repute both good and ill; Julia, the stately sister of the Great Cæsar; the noble Octavia; the proud and haughty but virtuous Agrippina; the dissolute daughter of the first Emperor; the beautiful Antonia; the awful figure of the Augusta; and his own mother, whose calculating wickedness and deliberate crime had finally brought him to the steps of the throne! Cast into the refining pot of the most terribly corrupt and demoralizing Court which ever controlled a so-called civilized State, these jarring and discordant elements had in some way fused and from the crucible at last appears the result of five generations of intermarrying among the most exclusive aristocracy the world ever saw—and behold! a Nero; who murdered his mother, his brother, his sister, his wives, and his unborn child; who burned Rome; who destroyed the very ashes of purity; and who finally tried even to exterminate virtue itself.

Nero was born at Antium on the fifteenth day of December in the year 37 A. D. At the time of his birth the

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

first year of the reign of his uncle, the Emperor Caligula, was drawing to a close, and it is astonishing to learn that notwithstanding the complete demoralization of society induced by the third Emperor, and which must necessarily have deformed the education of the young prince, he seems to have at first manifested no mean degree of character and promise. But the saying attributed to his father Domitius, that "nothing but what was detestable and pernicious to the public could ever be produced of him and Agrippina," proved in the end a more correct prognostic than the promise which he displayed as a mere boy, while performing his part in the Circensian games, and the merciful disposition which he indicated a little later when, being called upon for his first imperial subscription to the sentence of a condemned criminal, he uttered the pious wish that "he had never learned to read and write."

His father died when he was three years old, leaving Nero (or Domitius, as he was called until his adoption by Claudius) heir to one-third of his possessions; the remaining two-thirds being left to the reigning Emperor, from the customary prudential motives of wealthy Roman testators, who sought in this way to ensure at least a portion of their estate to their posterity. In the present case Caligula seized the whole, and supplemented this act of injustice to his young kinsman by shortly afterwards banishing his mother and confiscating all of her property.¹ The penniless and abandoned child thereupon found a home with his father's sister, the elder Lepida, whose daughter Messalina about this time became the wife of Claudius, a great-uncle of the young Domitius. There is a tradition that Messalina afterwards employed assassins to strangle Nero, in whom she foresaw a probable rival of her son

¹ *Ante*, page 88.

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Britannicus; and the story goes that the would-be murderers were frightened away by a snake which crept from under the cushion upon which the sleeping child lay. Whether true or false,—and it contains the elements of probability,—the story undoubtedly contributed to the hatred which in after years Nero cherished against his cousin, and which was accentuated by the latter's refusal to address his adoptive brother by any other name than that of the despised "Ahenobarbus." The proud young Claudian had undoubtedly been prompted to this irritating conduct by his preceptors, either already secretly in the pay of Agrippina, or unwisely seeking to provoke a difference between the two young men which might ultimately advance their own interests; and upon Nero's complaining of the alleged insult to Claudius, the latter, with his usual display of imbecility, punished all the most virtuous of his son's tutors with exile or death and replaced them with the minions of Agrippina. And yet the pitiable old man seemed not unaware of the nefarious designs of his wife; for he frequently prayed that "Britannicus might speedily attain to maturity and vigor and put to flight the enemies of his father! Ay, and be revenged even on the murderers of his mother."

But the arts of Agrippina invariably calmed her husband's suspicions, and the betrothal and marriage of Nero with the Emperor's daughter Octavia effectually prevented any diversion which the friends of Britannicus might otherwise have made in his favor. The marriage ceremony having been performed, as in the case of the accession of the second Emperor, it then remained only to secure the support of the army; and this Agrippina easily accomplished by inducing the Emperor to remove Rufius Crispinus, who was known to be devoted to the children of Mes-

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salina, and intrust the command of the prætorian cohorts to Burrhus Afranius, an incorruptible officer of high repute, but who naturally inclined towards the interests of those who procured his advancement.

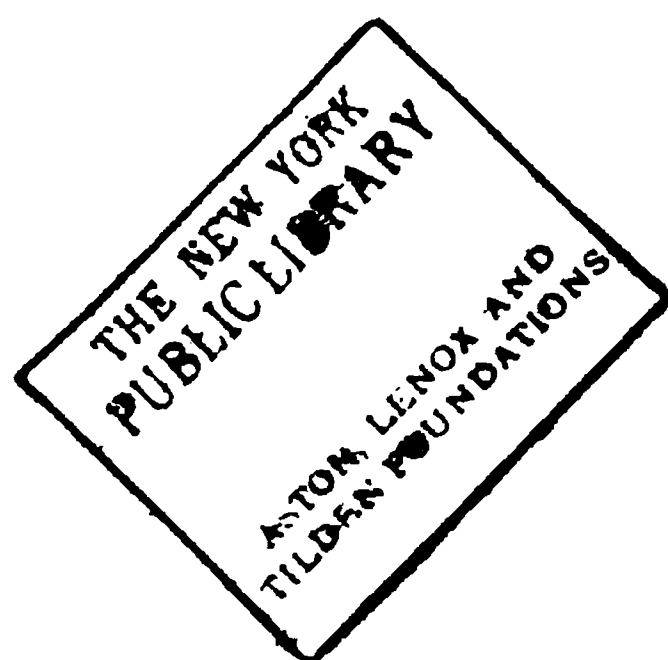
Everything now being in readiness, the arts of Locusta were invoked and Claudius was destroyed.¹ The instant his death was assured, Agrippina gave her instructions to Burrhus, who at once made ready to conduct Nero to the cohort, which, according to custom, was on guard at the palace where the Emperor was supposed to be dying. But an unexpected obstacle arose; the omens were unpropitious, and it became necessary to postpone the event until they should become more favorable. The situation was now extremely critical, not to say dangerous. Let it once be known that Claudius was dead, and the adherents of Britannicus might still arouse the people and prejudice the cohorts in favor of the rightful successor.² But the indomitable Agrippina was equal to the emergency. No one but Xenophon, Nero, Burrhus, and herself knew that the Emperor was actually dead. The Senate, which had been assembled, was still in session, while vows for the Emperor's recovery were even then being offered by the pontiffs and consuls. Emulating the example of her great-grandmother upon a similar occasion,³ the Empress set a strict guard at every approach to the palace, and then

¹ *Ante*, page 124.

² It is of course well understood that hereditary succession was not admitted by the Romans and that the head of the State was supposed to be elective, the Senate pretending to be the depositary of the public mind, although from an early period in the Empire this function was practically usurped by the army, which, however, respected the Cæsarean line as long as it lasted. And it has already been pointed out that the rule of hereditary succession substantially obtained. *Ante*, page 74.

³ *Ante*, page 44.

OCTAVIA SISTER OF AUGUSTUS



NERO

from time to time gave out bulletins of the Emperor's improving condition. His three children, Antonia, Octavia, and Britannicus, were detained by their stepmother in her own apartment—Britannicus, who was wild to go to his father's chamber, being actually clasped in the arms of the Empress to prevent his leaving the room.

But at last the omens were propitious. The death of the Emperor was announced by Xenophon; the palace gates were thrown open, and, preceded by Burrhus, Nero, magnificently clothed, and beaming with youth, health, and gratified pride and vanity, was borne to the cohorts, who received him with shouts and conducted him to the prætorian camp, where amid the wildest excitement he was saluted as Emperor. In the palace the poor young prince, released at last from the false embraces of his sinister stepmother, and accompanied by Octavia, ran to the place where lay the unwatched remains of imperial Cæsar, and there, with a prophetic vision of their own impending doom, the two young orphans in a passion of grief and misery cast themselves down by the side of him who with all his weakness and miserable wrong-doing had loved his children, and in his own blind way would have protected them until the end.

It was on the thirteenth of October in the year 54 A. D. that Nero was proclaimed by the soldiers, the Senate speedily ratifying the prætorians' decree. The circumstances of his accession bear a remarkable similarity to those which attended that of the second Emperor. Claudius was known to have been poisoned by his wife; Augustus was supposed to have been by his. The death of each was kept secret until matters were arranged for securing the Empire to an adopted son, whose interests had been insidiously advanced by a shrewdly wicked mother to the

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

exclusion of the descendant who was rightfully entitled to the throne. Into the future also were the points of similarity projected; for as Postumus Agrippa had fallen an early victim to the jealousy and hatred of a usurping adoptive brother, Britannicus met a similar fate at the hands of Nero; who himself likewise finally succumbed to the violence of a slave even as Tiberius eventually perished by the hand of Macro. One point of divergence indeed there was, in that Livia, the central figure in the crime of Tiberius's succession, lived to enjoy the fruits of her wickedness and to meet a peaceful end, after receiving the plaudits of the people and the title of Augusta, in recognition of her exalted services to the State; whereas her terrible descendant, although receiving the applause, securing the title, and emulating the magnificence of her great-grandmother, in the end tasted the full bitterness of the prophet's saying in the discovery that her child was thankless, and that the horrible crime of matricide was his final recognition of all the iniquities with which she had burdened her soul for him.

But now it was otherwise. She was at the summit of her accomplishments and the height of her power. She had come within a single step of rounding out the full possibility of relationship in the nearest degree to the imperial person; she had been the sister, the wife, the mother of an Emperor, and if Germanicus had received his dues the measure of possibility would have been full.¹ Everything was at last triumphant for this "Best of Mo-

¹ In his tragedy of *Britannicus*, Racine accords her the full measure, in the passage:

"*Moi, fille, femme, sœur et mère, de vos maîtres.*"

Poetical license may justify the line, as Agrippina was the great-granddaughter of Augustus.

NERO

thers," which was the new word given to the tribune of the guard on the first day of the reign of Nero.

And thus came to the throne, in the seventeenth year of his age, and scarce a generation after the death of the despised King of the Jews, the last Emperor of the house of Cæsar, fast tottering now to the ruins from which that other kingdom was to rise enduringly. In the ruins of that house, the "grandeur of human nature" may readily be discovered.

Nero was of short stature and rather thick set, with slender legs, and although constitutionally sound, was neither athletic nor active. His head was large and covered with a mass of yellowish hair, which he wore in rings, cut one above the other. In early life his features, although effeminate, were agreeable, if not actually handsome. But in later years the dull gray eyes, the thick bull neck and double chin, a sallow and unhealthy complexion, and that indescribable stamp of coarseness with which unchecked dissipation and openly indulged vice unfailingly brand the countenance, served to render him anything but attractive. In attire he seems to have been extremely careless, frequently appearing in public in the loose garb which he wore at table, without girdle or shoes, although with customary extravagance he never wore the same garment twice.

At an early age he was inculcated by Seneca with a taste for the fine arts, music and poetry ultimately sharing the remnants of affections which were in the main devoted to sensual enjoyments and the gratification of the most cruel instincts and vicious desires. The vainest school-boy could not covet popular applause more than Nero craved it for his musical and poetical efforts, failure to appreciate which inevitably resulted in rousing the Emperor's anger and not infrequently was punished by death.

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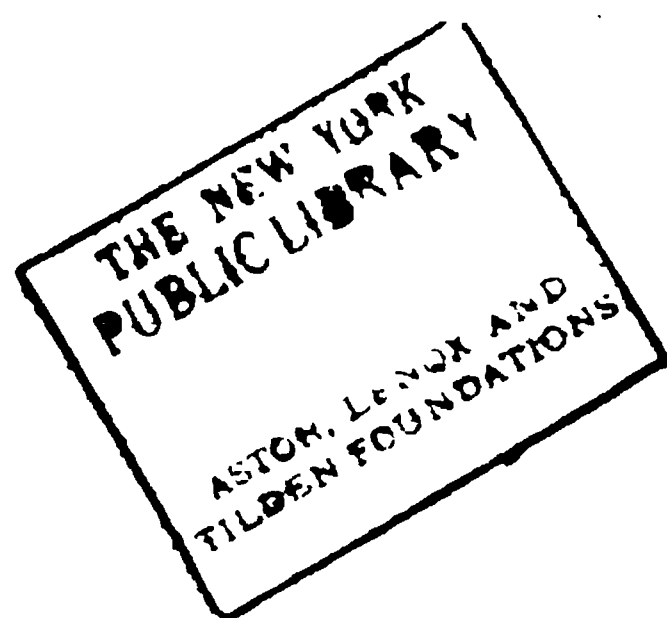
Extravagantly vain of his mediocre talents and possessed of an insatiable desire to immortalize his name, he even descended to compete upon the public stage with ordinary minstrels and actors; and as the honors were of course invariably accorded the royal buffoon, he soon became actually convinced that his gifts were of the divine order. There can be no doubt that the misery of his death was enhanced by the thought to which in the last hours he so frequently gave expression: that a great artist was perishing untimely.

Passionately fond of horses and chariot, he was a constant attendant at the exhibitions of the smaller circus, although frequently wearing a disguise from a sense of shame, to which on occasions of the most flagrant wrongdoing he was an entire stranger; and finally, in view of all the people and amidst the most tumultuous applause, he drove his chariot in the Circus Maximus. It was his one solitary display of manly attributes whatsoever.

In the use of riches Nero emulated the example of the Emperor Caligula, who was openly praised by his nephew for squandering so quickly the immense treasure which the successor of Augustus had accumulated. Nero's extravagance was almost incredible; it is said that the expenses of entertaining Tiridates, who was nine months in Rome as guest of the State, was eight hundred thousand sesterces a day; equivalent in the aggregate to £2,160,000. Suetonius (whose statements must, however, be taken *cum grano*) informs us that the Emperor had been known to stake four hundred thousand sesterces (£4000) on a throw of the dice, and that he never travelled with less than a thousand baggage carts. His extravagance reached its limits in the construction of his "Golden House." The palace of the Cæsars, as enlarged by Augustus from the

MARK ANTONY





NERO

dimensions of a private house, and extended by both Tiberius and Caligula, was still confined to the Palatine Hill. Nero continued it to the Esquiline Hill, and as finally rebuilt, after its destruction by the fire, its grandeur and magnificence are beyond modern conception. The author of the "Cæsars" says: "Of its dimensions and furniture it may be sufficient to say this much: The porch was so high that there stood in it a colossal statue of himself a hundred and twenty feet in height; and the space included in it was so ample, that it had triple porticos a mile in length, and a lake like a sea, surrounded with buildings which had the appearance of a city. Within its area were corn fields, vineyards, pastures, and woods, containing a vast number of animals of various kinds, both wild and tame. In other parts it was entirely overlaid with gold, and adorned with jewels, and mother-of-pearl. The supper rooms were vaulted, and compartments of the ceilings, inlaid with ivory, were made to revolve, and scatter flowers; while they contained pipes which shed unguents upon the guests. The chief banqueting room was circular, and revolved perpetually, night and day, in imitation of the motion of the celestial bodies. The baths were supplied with water from the sea and the Albula. Upon the dedication of this magnificent house after it was finished, all he said in approval of it was, 'that he had now a dwelling fit for a man.'"¹

During the first four years of his reign, with the exception of the heartless murder of Britannicus, the Emperor Nero seems to have ruled not only with mildness, but with a show of justice, wisdom, and even temperance. Trajan does not hesitate to declare that these years were proverbial in succeeding ages for the wisdom, clemency,

¹ Suetonius, *Nero*, xxxi.

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and happiness by which they were distinguished. But at the expiration of that interval the naturally evil instincts of the Emperor were gradually brought into play—largely, as it appears, through the malign influence of Poppæa. Relieved from all restraint by the death of his mother, the baser inclinations of his nature speedily triumphed over the weak opposition of a false manhood, which may have been aroused by the early precepts of Seneca and the rough but virile example of Burrhus; and during the remainder of his reign the Emperor's conduct was a mixture of puerilities, senseless extravagance, cruelty, lust, and murder. Although there have not been wanting attempts to show that the last of the Cæsars was not the depraved and ferocious monster painted by the fathers of Roman history, the effort has failed. The character of Nero can be whitewashed no more than the character of Washington can be blackened; in these two respects at least the conclusions of posterity must remain unchanged. Augustine was right in speaking of Nero as the most finished pattern of wicked rulers; and there is small reason to wonder that for years the ignorant and credulous cherished a belief that the son of Agrippina yet lived as Anti-christ and would return to reign over the kingdom of error when the full measure of human iniquity should be fulfilled. Certain it is that no one possessing the most shadowy instincts of humanity can read even that portion of the history of Nero which is absolutely undisputed, without being moved to the anger, disgust, and abhorrence for which there is but a single apt expression—*“Anathema.”*

CHAPTER XI

THE FAMILY OF NERO

THE first wife of the Emperor Nero was Octavia, the only daughter of the Emperor Claudius and his fifth wife, Messalina. Octavia was thus related to her husband both through her father and her mother, Claudius being uncle to Nero's mother, Agrippina, while Messalina's mother, Lepida, was the sister of Cneius Domitius, Nero's father.

Octavia was born in the year 42 A. D., two years before her father became Emperor, and while yet a mere child she was betrothed to Lucius Silanus, one of the three great-great-grandsons of Augustus, in the direct line of the two Julias. The suicide of Silanus, after his disgrace by Claudius, the murder of his father by Messalina, and the subsequent betrothal and marriage of Octavia and Nero have already been related.¹ Upon the accession of Nero, the invariable murder which signalized the commencement of a new reign found its victim in the family of Silanus.

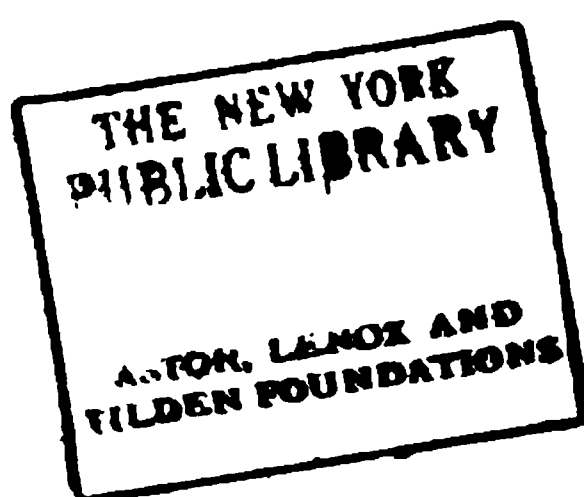
Lucius Silanus, the betrothed of Octavia, had two brothers, one named Torquatus, the other Marcus Junius. The latter is said to have lived in such a state of indolence that the Emperor Caligula sneeringly nicknamed him "the Golden Sheep." But as posterity may well be suspicious of the virtue applauded by Caligula, so in the object of his contempt we may expect to find evidence of decided worth. It is therefore cause for no surprise to learn that Silanus was a man of unblemished character; which fact, together with his relationship to the Cæsars, in the direct

¹ *Ante*, pages 112 and 119.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

line of the divine Augustus, rendered him an object both of suspicion and fear to Agrippina, who had murdered his brother Lucius. The death of Silanus occurred so soon after the accession of Nero that it was doubtless planned by the Empress in advance of that event. Marcus Junius was proconsul of Asia at the time, and poison was openly administered to him at a banquet by two revenue farmers of the Emperor. Nero, however, must be acquitted of complicity in this crime, responsibility for which rests solely upon Agrippina and her heartless instruments, one of whom was a freedman and the other a Roman knight. But the evil passions of this apparently mild and gentle Emperor, who at first grieved to sign the death-warrant of a hardened criminal, were only sleeping. Ten years later, when the product of Agrippina and Cneius Domitius had, in the prophetic language of the latter, indeed manifested himself "detestable and pernicious," Torquatus, the last male of this generation of the Silani, was driven to an ignominious death by his imperial kinsman. The persecution of Torquatus, who was of the noble Junian family, in addition to being descended from Augustus, was accounted for merely because of the splendor of his lineage. He was accused of being "prodigal in his bounties"; and it was charged that he had "no other resource than in revolution; and that already he kept men of no mean rank, with the style of secretaries, accountants, treasurers; names belonging to the imperial function and indicating preparations for assuming it." Torquatus saw that his doom was sealed and calmly opened the veins of both arms. His death was speedily followed by that of his nephew Lucius, only son of Marcus Junius, and the last of his race, the circumstances of whose destruction will be related in another connection.

CLEOPATRA



THE FAMILY OF NERO

The marriage of Nero and Octavia occurred about a year before the death of Claudius, Nero being at the time in his sixteenth year, while Octavia was scarcely more than eleven years old. In all the dread history of the family of Cæsar there is perhaps no sadder story than that of Octavia. Her noble birth, her sweet and gentle disposition, the tenderness of the relation existing between the ill-fated Britannicus and herself, the ignominious ending of her mother, the tragic death of her father, her compulsory marriage to Nero,—the son of the murderer of her first betrothed, whose noble and engaging qualities had gained her childish affection, and whose self-imposed death, under a shameful accusation, must have deeply shocked her pure and sensitive spirit,—the terrible death of her brother, followed by years of indescribable anguish culminating in a pitiable death at the hands of her husband, the destroyer of her race; in fact, all the circumstances of her short life were at once so full of horror, and so touchingly pathetic that it only needed the assurance (for which there seems to be a foundation of fact) that Octavia was a Christian, to arouse our deepest sympathy for her and our endless abhorrence of the monster who dragged her through the mire. In the deaths of Thræsea and Octavia, Nero might well have thought, from the standpoint of paganism, that he had accomplished his wish to destroy virtue itself.

All the sweet and lovely traits of Octavia, which, as she came to maturity and surrounded as she was by the temptations of an innately depraved and vicious Court, had deepened into a genuinely beautiful character, failed to attract Nero, although not yet fully launched upon his career of unchecked wickedness. His affections were soon engaged by a beautiful freedwoman named Acte, whose influence over the young Emperor, combined with that

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of Seneca, Burrhus, and a young man who was afterwards the Emperor Otho, speedily gave indication of undermining the power of Agrippina, which had theretofore been supreme. The rage and fury of the latter upon discovering what was going on were such as might be expected from her passionate nature and imperious spirit. If she had confined herself to her usual system of menace and terrorism, the breach might have been repaired; but in an unguarded moment she awoke the dormant hyena in her son by declaring in the Emperor's hearing that "Britannicus was now grown up¹ and was worthy to succeed to that Empire of his father which an adopted son swayed by trampling upon his mother." And then after accounting the many atrocities she had perpetrated for his sake, she turned directly to her son and, heaping reproaches upon him, with violent gesticulations declared that "by the providence of the gods and her own forethought one resource remained to her—her stepson was still alive; with him she would repair to the camp where on the one side would be heard the daughter of Germanicus and on the other the impotent Burrhus and the exiled Seneca,² one with a maimed hand and the other with the tongue of a pedagogue pressing their claim to govern the world."³

Nero was alarmed at this outbreak on the part of a woman whose impetuosity and determination were so well known, and who had approved herself capable of conceiving and executing whatsoever crime to accomplish her ends. All the latent deviltry in his essentially evil nature

¹ Britannicus was nearly fourteen years old at the time of his death.

² Seneca, who was accused of an intrigue with Julia, the daughter of Germanicus, was banished by the Emperor Claudius to the isle of Corsica. He had been recalled by the influence of Agrippina.

³ *Annals*, xiii. 14.

THE FAMILY OF NERO

was awakened by his fear, and he determined to forestall his mother in the use of her own weapons. He was the more ready to destroy Britannicus because at the festival of the Saturnalia the latter in singing had acquitted himself in so creditable a manner as to deeply arouse the anger of the Emperor, who, priding himself upon his own voice, had all the mean jealousy of others' success so commonly displayed by ambitious mediocrity. He at once invoked the aid of the terrible Locusta,¹ who prepared a poison which was administered to Britannicus by his tutors. It failed of effect, and the Emperor in a rage threatened the sorceress with immediate execution if she did not furnish a poison which would cause instant death; and a more deadly compound was thereupon concocted in a chamber adjoining that of the Emperor.

That evening at dinner the deed was done. Britannicus was reclining at the special table accorded him in right of his princely extraction, in full sight of the numerous assemblage which nightly surrounded the table of Cæsar in the Golden House. A cup of drink, after first being tasted by an official in attendance for that purpose, was handed to the young prince, who, finding the liquor scalding hot, directed that some cold water be added. The poison was contained in the latter and its action was so powerful that at the first draught Britannicus was bereft of speech and expired almost immediately. Even the hardened associates of the dissolute tyrant and his imperial Court were stricken with consternation at so terrible and unexpected an exhibition of his heartless savagery, and many fled hastily from the apartment, forgetful that such a breach of decorum was punishable with death by Cæsar, thus outraged. The more experienced courtiers, however,

¹ Locusta prepared the poison which destroyed Claudius. *Ante*, page 124.

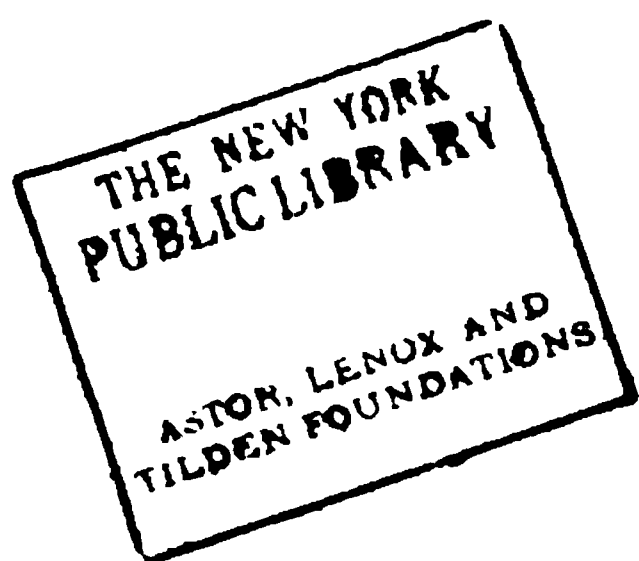
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kept their places, anxiously awaiting their cue from the Emperor, who, maintaining his careless reclining posture, calmly declared that "he himself used to be so affected by reason of the falling sickness, with which Britannicus had been from early childhood afflicted; and that by degrees his sight and senses would return." So that after a short silence, in the midst of which the dead boy was carried from the room, the delights of the banquet were resumed, the orphaned Octavia, who had long ago mastered the "peace of suspense," by learning to conceal every natural affection, proudly hiding her grief and torture, while regarding with an eye apparently cold and unmoved the removal of all that was mortal of the only surviving relative she had loved and for whose love she cared, the last male of the proud Claudian race, which for centuries had contributed to the Roman grandeur in which its own greatness blazed so brightly.

It was different with Agrippina. The dismay with which she had witnessed the death of Britannicus amounted to positive terror, and vainly she strove to suppress her consternation and alarm. For to her penetrating mind the conviction came with all the suddenness of her stepson's death that her domination of the boy Emperor was gone forever; and close upon this reflection followed the darksome thought that from the poisoning of Britannicus to the crime of matricide was but a step for one who could strike so quickly, so openly, with such terrible effectiveness and such freedom from compunction as the "detestable and pernicious" son, whose heartless laughter rang in her terrified ears while the door had scarce closed upon the body of his victim.

It was her first manifestation of weakness during a long life of danger and vicissitudes, and was an indication that

AGRIPPINA MOTHER OF NERO



THE FAMILY OF NERO

fortune was making ready to leave her, who was at last driven to admit distrust as to her own powers. But although the talisman was thus lost, the old courage and inflexibility were by no means gone; and attaching herself to Octavia, as closely as the coldly impassive but gentle sister of Britannicus would permit, she practised all of her arts to build up among the few remaining nobles a party which in an emergency might be rallied to the support of herself under a new leader.

The throw was a desperate one, and it lost. By her previous conduct the daughter of Germanicus had made bitter enemies, and in the hour of her misfortune these did not scruple to seek their revenge. It was not necessary for the Emperor to employ spies to learn of his mother's new schemes, and before long the guards which had attended her as the widow of Claudius and mother of the reigning Emperor were withdrawn. This mark of disrespect was speedily followed by Agrippina's forced removal from the palace to a house at a considerable distance which had once been occupied by Antonia, the Emperor's grandmother.

One night while Nero was carousing as usual, an actor named Paris, who was one of the freedmen of Agrippina's bitter rival, Domitia Lepida, by whom he was undoubtedly instigated, entered hastily and with feigned terror informed his imperial master that Agrippina was conspiring to overturn the State in favor of Rubellius Plautus, son of Rubellius Blandus and Julia, the granddaughter of Tiberius. The enraged and terrified Emperor determined to put to death both Agrippina and Plautus without waiting for morning even; but was finally prevailed upon by Burrhus to first grant his mother the liberty of a defence. The accusation against Agrippina was brought by

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proud and conscienceless ambition, was to be the advantage of her son. But we are too human, our horror and detestation of the abominations which she performed are too overwhelming, for us to bring an adequate mercy into our judgment of Agrippina; that may come only from the God of the Christians whom her son persecuted so savagely.

From the terrors of remorse with which even Nero was tortured after this impious deed, the Emperor sought forgetfulness by plunging into new excesses; first, however, endeavoring to heighten the popular hatred towards Agrippina by addressing letters to the Senate, in which, after rehearsing the long list of his mother's crimes and charging upon her all the atrocities of the reign of Claudius, he falsely declared that she had at the last attempted his assassination, and closed by saying that "through the good fortune of the State she had fallen." He was assured in reply that "the very name of Agrippina was detested and that by her death the affections of the people toward him had been kindled into a flame." Abandoning himself now to the most inordinate passions, he speedily came under the tyranny of new masters, notably the infamous Tigellinus; and before long Seneca and Burrhus succumbed to the bloodthirsty demands of the later favorites—Burrhus, as it is alleged, by poison, while Seneca opened his veins by command of his pupil and master. There is that in the rough old soldier which moves our sympathy, but nothing except contempt remains for the moral philosopher who had been an accomplice in his pupil's crime of matricide.

Tigellinus was now the power behind the throne, and under his deadly influence the imperial beast was hurried into new crimes which finally resulted in an entire

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

obliteration of the race of Cæsar as well as a practical annihilation of the scanty nobility which remained. The first victim was the noble young Plautus,¹ who in Junia's accusation had been named as the central figure in Agrippina's alleged conspiracy. At the time of the latter's acquittal, Plautus was passed over in silence; but a little later he had been compelled by Nero's jealousy and distrust to expatriate himself, retiring with his wife, Antistia, and a few friends to Asia, where he had large possessions. His cold-blooded butchery by the Emperor's centurion has already been related; and after despatching the great-great-grandson of Tiberius, the assassins crossed to Marseilles, where Sylla, the second husband of Antonia, the Emperor's sister-in-law, was living in exile, and there murdered the young noble as he sat at meat, without previous warning or apprehension.

The next to pay the penalty of a near relationship to Cæsar was Domitia Lepida, the sister of Nero's father. She had narrowly escaped the fate of her sister Lepida, murdered by Agrippina, and had lived to gloat over the downfall of her old enemy, whom she was, however, not destined long to survive. One day, while confined to her bed by illness, she received a visit from the Emperor, and being advanced in years, she drew the young man towards her and, stroking his chin in the tenderness of affection, said that if only her life might be spared "until this is shaved the first time, she would die contented." Her affectionate nephew, turning to those about him, said that he

¹ Suetonius mentions "the young Aulus Plautinus" as among the Emperor's relatives, by blood or marriage, who were put to death by Nero. From the context, in connection with Tacitus's account of the death of Rubellius Plautus, it is apparent that Plautus was referred to by the former historian.

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would have his beard immediately taken off; but, without waiting for the ceremony,¹ directed the physicians to mingle a poison with his aunt's medicine, and immediately thereafter confiscated her estate.

Through all of these scenes of violence and bloodshed the gentle Octavia had serenely awaited the fate which since the death of Britannicus she had known to be impending, and which now at last overtook her. Assured by the complacent manner in which the Senate received information of the deaths of Plautus and Sylla "that all his villainies passed for acts of exemplary merit," as Tacitus quaintly expresses it, the Emperor rudely divorced Octavia and immediately thereafter celebrated his marriage with Poppæa. This woman, noted alike for her beauty and depravity, was said to have "possessed every ornament but that of an unpolluted mind." Beautiful, wealthy, accomplished, of splendid birth, engaging in conversation, endowed with intellectual gifts, and in exterior deportment correct to a fault, she was especially adapted to satisfy the undoubted artistic sensibilities of the young Emperor, now in the twenty-fifth year of his age, while appealing in the most dangerously seductive way to all the lower instincts of his depraved nature. While yet the wife of Rufius Crispus, who had been captain of the prætorian guards under the Emperor Claudius, she was allured by Otho, one of Nero's companions, who afterwards himself became Emperor. In a boastful moment Otho carelessly extolled the charms of his wife to the Emperor, who, immediately seeking an interview, speedily became inflamed by the arts of Poppæa and proposed to her the higher al-

¹ The first shaving of the beard was marked by a particular ceremony among the Romans. While the period varied somewhat, it was usually in the twenty-first year.

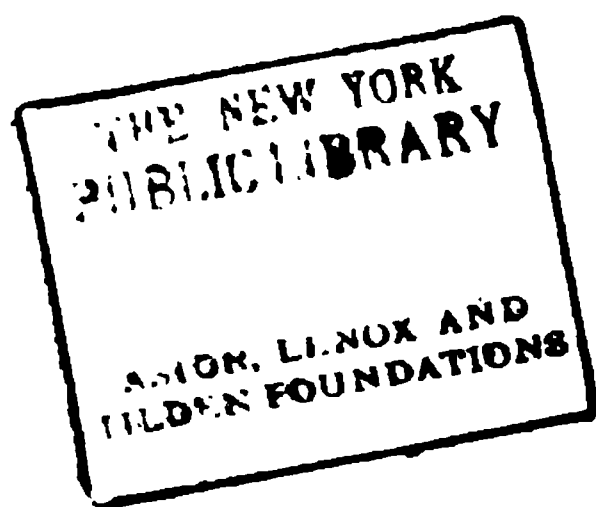
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liance for which, conscious of her beauty and other powerful attractions, she had already been scheming.

Empress at last, with three husbands living and undivorced, Poppæa could not feel entirely free from danger until Octavia was actually dead. She suborned one of the latter's domestics to accuse her mistress of an offence which Poppæa herself had never reckoned as other than a venial sin. Although the charge was plainly disproven, the craven Nero exiled the object of his new wife's hatred and placed a guard of soldiers over her in Campania, which was the place of her banishment. But the cowardly husband was easily terrified by the clamors of the populace, by whom Octavia had always been loved, and the princess was at once recalled. Upon her return Rome went wild. The statues of Poppæa were overthrown, while those of Octavia, wreathed in garlands, were carried on the shoulders of the people, who marched first to the temples to offer thanks to the gods, and thence to the palace to express their grateful adoration for the Emperor.

The incident was artfully turned by Poppæa to her own advantage. She appealed to Nero as his lawful wife, who was about to give an offspring to the fast-thinning family of the Cæsars, but whose very life was in danger by the slaves of the barren Octavia, who, calling themselves the people of Rome, had insulted the imperial dignity by their attack upon the object of their Emperor's affection, through insults heaped upon her statue; and she closed by hinting that neither Nero nor herself would have peace until Octavia was dead. The rage of Nero was effectually aroused by this shrewd address, and as the evidence of a slave had proved insufficient, another instrument was selected with which to accomplish the ruin of Octavia. This time Nero himself made the arrange-

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ments. He sent for Anicetus, the same who had murdered Agrippina, and said to him that "as he alone had saved the life of the prince from the dark devices of his mother, an opportunity for a service of no less magnitude now presented itself by relieving him from a wife who was his mortal enemy; nor was there need of force of arms; he had only to admit adultery with Octavia."

The brutal murderer of Agrippina of course would not balk at so slight a service as this, and the Emperor thereupon published an edict that "Octavia in hopes of engaging the fleet in a conspiracy had corrupted Anicetus, the admiral." To carry out the delusion the latter was forthwith banished to Sardinia, where he lived in pretended exile, and after enjoying the abundant reward bestowed by Nero for his shameful service, came to a natural, if not peaceful, end. Octavia was again sent away—this time to fatal Pandataria, where so many of her kindred after living in exile and wretchedness had suffered death by violence or starvation at the hands of the imperial jailer. And now, deprived even of the friendly offices of her slaves and attendants, surrounded by coarse centurions and common soldiers, with every hope crushed and sinking beneath the shame of a false and infamous accusation which she had not been permitted even to answer, this fair young girl of nineteen years saw that the fate which so long had threatened her had come at last. After an interval of only a few days the centurion informed her that she must die. The delicate daughter of the Cæsars was bound with cords and her veins opened in every joint; and as the flow of blood was retarded by the bodily fear and shrinking which in the extreme moment even her resigned and lofty spirit was unable to control, death was accelerated by submerging her in a bath of vapor heated

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to the highest possible temperature. Nor did she escape the final indignity: the beautiful head upon which tradition said that the Apostle Peter's hand had rested in baptism, was cut off by the centurion and conveyed to Poppæa as proof unanswerable that her cruel orders had been fulfilled.

Although the popularity of Nero received a great shock by the murder of Octavia, the approval of the gods was clearly manifested in the safe delivery of Poppæa's daughter, the offspring which Nero had so anxiously awaited, and whose coming was heralded by Emperor and people with unbounded joy. The child was named Augusta, a temple was decreed in honor of her birth, and the event signalized by many other extravagant demonstrations on the part of the Senate. But the joy of the Emperor was short-lived, Augusta dying within four months after her birth. Her death provoked a new kind of flattery, which was nothing short of an apotheosis, the child of Nero and Poppæa being decreed a goddess and accorded the honor of a permanent place among the immortals.

After the death of his child Nero abandoned himself to a series of crimes so dark and atrocious that for the time being it must have seemed to Rome that the spirit of Caligula had found a resting-place in his imperial nephew. Among the victims of his ferocity during this period of the Emperor's life were the devoted believers in that faith which had sustained the gentle Octavia in all the bitterness of her later years. Under the false accusation of having started the fire which he himself kindled, the disciples of Paul and Peter were destroyed by thousands and under circumstances of such atrocity that human nature recoils in horror from the mere narration of events which to the eyes of the degraded and bloodthirsty populace were only

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an exceptional holiday entertainment provided for their delight by the "Father of his Country." Besides the persecution of the Christians and the wanton destruction of Rome, the pages of Tacitus and Suetonius groan beneath a relation of the most horrible and unnamable crimes which were perpetrated by this "divine artist," as he was fond of terming himself; so that it is positively a relief to turn away from a recital so sickening and recur once more to the ordinary and every-day murders with which the most infamous of the Cæsars was now speedily removing the few remaining persons who were allied to him by blood or by affinity.

Poppæa was the first to succumb in the Emperor's last mad onslaught upon his family. Reproaching him for his long absence and late return one night when she was in ill health, the Empress was rewarded by her brutal husband with a kick, from the effects of which she soon died. Grieving as much perhaps for the loss of his unborn child as for the death of Poppæa (whom it is said he had fruitlessly endeavored to poison), Nero was at first apparently overwhelmed by remorse, but soon roused himself to the performance of a manifest duty: the discovery of a victim for the crime which had been committed. Poppæa's father and mother were dead; the former, Titus Ollius, having been destroyed by Sejanus, the latter, Poppæa Sabina, murdered by Messalina in connection with the conspiracy which resulted in the death of Asiaticus.¹ Poppæa's son, Rufinus Crispinus, by her first husband was also dead; having been thrown into the sea by order of Nero because he was reported to have played the part of an Emperor among his playfellows. But her first husband, Rufius Crispinus, was still alive; he would be a fitting sacrifice

¹ *Ante*, page 114.

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to the manes of the murdered Poppæa, and the virtuous Emperor breathed more freely when the centurion reported that his errand had been performed and Crispinus was no more. Otho, the second husband of Poppæa, was suffered to live, as the Emperor had need of his vices for the time.

Following the rule of his imperial predecessors, whose invariable custom it was to as speedily as possible fill the place of each deceased wife with a new Empress, Nero sought a marriage with the twice-widowed Antonia, his adoptive sister, the half-sister of the murdered Octavia, and, with the exception of Nero himself, the only living descendant of the Empress Livia Augusta. To her lasting honor be it said, the proud daughter of Claudius disdainfully refused the proffered alliance, and was immediately put to death by the enraged Nero, under pretence that she was engaged in a plot against him. It is fair to say that there are conflicting opinions as to Antonia's complicity in the conspiracy, which was that of Piso. Pliny asserts that Antonia had married Piso and consented to use her influence with the army in securing for her husband the favor of the people, after Nero's death should have cleared the way to the throne. The author of the "Annals," however, plainly discredits this report; while expressly declaring his purpose to state only historic truth in regard to Antonia, he says that it is not only quite improbable that Antonia would have lent her name to a project from which she would have nothing to hope, but as well that Piso, who was tenderly devoted to his wife, although she was a woman of extreme depravity and devoid of every recommendation but personal beauty, would have entered into a matrimonial contract with another; "unless it be," as the historian philosophically muses, "that the

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lust of domination burns with a flame so fierce as to overpower all other affections of the human breast."

Upon the discovery of his conspiracy Piso was put to death by the usual method of opening his veins—a death commonly supposed to be comparatively free from suffering, but which in the majority of cases is attended by excruciating pain. The plot was widespread, involving families and individuals of every rank, age, and sex, and the furious Emperor took such a bloody and wholesale revenge that, as we are darkly informed, "at one and the same time the City was thronged with funerals and the Capitol with victims."

But this carnival of blood had not diverted the Emperor from his intention of taking another wife, and a selection was finally made in the person of Statilia Messalina,¹ mentioned as the great-granddaughter of Statilius Taurus, who lived in the time of Augustus, and who built the great amphitheatre called after his name, which stood in the Campus Martius.² Statilia was married at the time; and it is thus worthy of note, that this last marriage of the last imperial Caesar occurred under similar circumstances to the last marriage of the first Emperor. In the case of Augustus, however, Tiberius Nero was allowed to die a natural death—from shame at the disgrace which had been inflicted upon him. Of course, from the high-spirited Nero action so mild could not be expected in dealing with one who had displayed the temerity of marrying a woman to whom the Emperor of Rome afterwards condescended to pay his addresses. Statilia's husband was Atticus Vestinus, the consul, a man of independent spirit,

¹ It is uncertain whether Statilia was related to the wife of Claudius.

² The elevation called the Monte Citorio is supposed to have been formed by its ruins.

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and who had apparently given some expression to his scorn at the cowardly bearing of the Emperor. Nero at first endeavored to connect Vestinus with Piso's conspiracy; but it became so plain that the consul had been entirely ignorant of the plot, that the Emperor abandoned all forms and despatched a tribune with orders to put Vestinus to death. In the graphic description of Tacitus, "he had that day discharged all the functions of consul, and was celebrating a banquet totally devoid of fear, or perhaps in order to hide his fears, when the soldiers entering told him the tribune wanted him. Without a moment's delay he rose from the table and every particular of the business was at once carried into instant execution; he was shut up in a chamber; a physician was at hand; his veins were opened; and while yet full of life he was conveyed into a bath and immersed in hot water, not a word betokening regret escaping him. Meanwhile those who supped with him were enclosed with a guard, nor released till the night was far spent and till Nero having pictured to himself and passed his jokes upon the terror of men, expecting when they rose from the table to be put to death, signified that they had paid dear enough for their consular supper."

It might be thought that Messalina was blotted out of existence with her first husband, as other than the fact of her marriage, which is well attested, we find no further mention of her during the reign of Nero. But in some inscrutable manner she must have survived during both the remainder of his life and—for the widow of a murdered Emperor—the more critical period of his death. For in the history of Otho it is stated that in a letter written by that Emperor in anticipation of death, he "committed the care of his relics (ashes) and memory to Messalina, Nero's

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widow, whom he had intended to marry." Otho's intention was perhaps in the nature of a post-mortem reprisal upon his predecessor, who had a few years since robbed him of Poppæa Sabina.

To this period belongs the death of the younger Silanus, with the exception of the Emperor himself the last male Cæsar. Silanus, who was the only son of Marcus Junius Silanus¹ and thus the great-great-great-grandson of the Emperor Augustus, was a young man of the highest quality. He had been educated under the tuition of Cassius Longinus, an eminent lawyer, by whom it is said the young Lucius "was formed to every noble aspiration." Cassius was preëminent for elevated character, great abilities, and hereditary opulence, and the tie of mutual esteem and affection which existed between pupil and master had been strengthened by the marriage of the latter to Junia Lepida, the aunt of Silanus. In the time of Caligula, while holding the office of proconsul of Asia, Cassius had been unjustly suspected of the conspiracy to discover which Quintilia had been so shockingly tortured;² and his death having been decreed by Caligula, he was summoned to Rome; but the tyrant fortunately died before his arrival. He was now far advanced in years and blind; utterly unconscious of plots and conspiracies and devoted to forming the graceful mind and opening character of his young kinsman.

The virtuous picture did not escape the evil eye of the besotted Nero, and he formally accused Cassius of cherishing among the images of his ancestors the bust of Caius Cassius,³ inscribed "the leader of the party"; and that in addition to thus venerating the memory of a name implacably hostile to the family of the Cæsars, he had attached

¹ *Ante*, page 137.

² *Ante*, page 92.

³ One of Cæsar's murderers

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to his person the descendant of Augustus, with a view of making him the centre of his revolutionary schemes. Silanus was himself charged with the same accusations which had formerly been brought against his uncle Torquatus, and finally the Emperor procured informers to accuse the wife of Cassius of "practising horrible magic rites" and of incest with her nephew.

After gravely hearing the "charges," the Senate pronounced sentence of banishment against Cassius, who was sent to Sardinia, where Nero planned to kill him, but himself died too soon, and the virtuous old man was recalled by Galba and died peacefully at Rome. The case of Lepida was "referred to Cæsar," and we are uninformed as to her punishment; but can we doubt what befell a descendant of Augustus who vanished into the darkness of Nero's mercy? Not, at least, if we may judge from the fate of her nephew. No sentence was pronounced upon Silanus, who was at first merely confined in the city of Barium, in Apulia. But while living there in the greatest extremity, he was confronted one day by a centurion who roughly ordered him to open his veins. The son of Marcus Junius, however, was no Cicero nor Seneca. Descended from a long line of ancestors, in no generation of whom was death by violence unknown, the spirited young Julian, in whose character seemed blended all the better elements of his race, determined that if the final destruction of that race were now at hand, he at least would not allow an assassin the glory of accomplishing it. Athletic in form and inured to manly exercises, he fought his assailants with naked hands until, overpowered by the soldiers, "he fell as though in battle from wounds received from the centurion in front of his body."

Thus perished the last male of the line of Augustus,

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with the exception of Nero; and with the possible exception also of one or two females, whose fate is shrouded in darkness, the last of the house of Cæsar. His great-great-grandmother, Julia, the daughter of Augustus, had been starved to death by Tiberius. His great-grandmother, the younger Julia, had perished in the same way, and his great-grandfather, Lucius Paulus, had also fallen by the wayside. His grandfather, Appius Junius, was murdered by Claudius and Messalina, while his father, Marcus Junius, had been poisoned by Agrippina, who also forced one of his uncles to commit suicide, while Nero destroyed the other. For six generations death at the hands of Cæsar had been the heritage of his house; and with his own brave life went out forever the last spark of virtue in the family which the great Julius had founded a century before.¹

Close upon the destruction of his last blood relation came the final murder among the Emperor's connections by marriage. The victims were Lucius Vetus, who had formerly been a colleague of Nero in the consulship, and Antistia, his daughter, widow of the murdered Plautus.² We are told that they had been long hated by the Emperor, their existence, whenever called to his attention, seeming to reproach him with the murder of Antistia's husband, the son-in-law of his old friend. The young widow had abandoned herself to grief ever since she beheld the assassins who had butchered her brave husband, and had been with difficulty prevailed upon to take nutriment sufficient to maintain life. But when a guard of soldiers secretly beset the country seat of her father, the broken-hearted daughter, by a supreme effort controlling

¹ The death of Silanus occurred in the year 65 A. D.

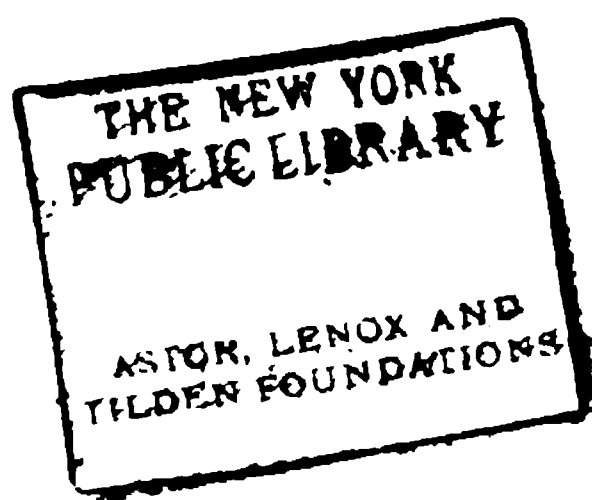
² *Ante*, page 72.

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her own sufferings, hastened to Nero, to entreat in person for her parent's life. She might as well have pleaded to a starving hyena, of which she herself was speedily convinced; whereupon returning to Vetus, father, daughter, and the latter's grandmother Sextia, after distributing all their portable property among the domestics, in order that the imperial thief might not profit too much by their death, quietly opened their veins and expired in the order of their respective ages.

Although the victims were not related to him, either by blood or affinity, one other crime of Nero's requires mention as being in some respects the most flagrant among all the brutal deeds of wickedness which soon were to people the madman's last terrible hours with pale and weeping ghosts and blood-stained, menacing spectres. "After shedding the blood of so many men of eminence," says the historian, "Nero at last conceived a burning intention to extirpate virtue itself, by putting to death Thrasea Pætus and Bareas Soranus." Degraded as Roman society had become under the low and evil standard, which, radiating uninterruptedly from the Palatine during half a century, had now fairly undermined the primitive purity and integrity of the entire State, it is supremely encouraging to know that among all the Roman senators Thrasea and Soranus, "*because of their elevated character and undoubted virtue,*" were greatly beloved by the people. The fact was of course in itself sufficient to rouse the jealous hatred of Nero. But in the case of Thrasea, there were special reasons for the Emperor's animosity. Twice had the noble and lofty-minded senator refused to sacrifice his self-respect by uniting in the servile flatteries which his cowardly and fawning associates invariably bestowed upon their vile master after some crime of peculiar atrocity; once when it was pro-

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posed by the Senate to publicly congratulate Nero for the murder of his mother, and again when divine honors were being decreed to Poppæa—on each of which occasions Thrasea walked out of the Senate. He had been reproached by his friends for thus laying the foundation of danger for himself without opening a source of liberty to others. But this was the pagan view. In the wider horizon of the Christian's hope, the silent protest of truth against falsehood, of virtue against vice, of good against evil, when manifested by the refusal of a noble soul to acquiesce in an act of dishonor, however futile and useless at the moment, is seen to be the sowing of a spirit which in later times shall spring into the life of a magnificent accomplishment in the unending war for the liberation of mankind.

For a long time Nero cherished his rage in secret, fearing too much the wrath of the people to openly destroy their idol. But taking advantage of a moment when the attention of the populace was absorbed in the reception of Tiridates, the Parthian (who had come to receive his crown from Cæsar), the ceremonies attending which were the most magnificent Rome had ever seen, the Emperor ventured to accomplish his vengeance. Soranus was charged with the time-honored accusation of having supported the pretensions of Rubellius Plautus; with his devoted young daughter Servilia he was condemned to death. Thrasea was condemned upon what in modern times would be called "general principles"; the charge against him being "that he had trampled upon all the civil and sacred institutions of our ancestors." The soldiers found him at evening in his beautiful gardens, surrounded by his friends and conversing with the cynic philosopher Demetrius. His noble wife, Arria, daughter of that other Arria of heroic

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memory,¹ essayed to share his fate, but he restrained her by saying that she must not deprive their daughter of her remaining refuge. His veins were opened, and when the blood began to flow he sprinkled it upon the floor, crying, "Let us make a libation to Jove, the deliverer"; and calling his son-in-law, the noble young Helvidius, he said to him, "Behold, young man, and may the gods avert the omen, but you are fallen upon such times that it may be useful to fortify your mind by examples of unflinching firmness."

Virtue was dead; it remained for vice also to be exterminated, and the last act in the dark tragedy of the family of Cæsar was fast approaching, when the curtain was to fall upon a race of rulers who, pretending to a place among the gods, had, with one marked exception, by their lives relegated themselves to the lowest depths of infamy and brute degradation, which all the splendor and magnificence of their wonderful Empire cannot conceal.

Thrasea had been slain in the thirteenth year of the Emperor's reign, and for perhaps eighteen months longer the ruthless murderer of virtue was tolerated by a groaning world. Then came the end, slow muttering at first, but at the last swiftly, tragically, terribly as the sternest exaction of justice, untinged with mercy, could demand. The Gauls, under Julius Vindex, a Roman general in command of the province, first raised the standard of rebellion; so that it was from the indomitable people upon whose conquest by the great Julius the house of Cæsar founded its power, that there came the first ominous mutterings of a gather-

¹ The wife of Thrasea was the daughter of the celebrated Arria, who in the reign of Claudius, to encourage her husband, who had been ordered to commit suicide, plunged a dagger in her own breast, saying, "Strike, my Pætus, it does not hurt!"

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ing storm, by which the last stone of the princely structure which had towered so loftily was now to be wrathfully overthrown. The news of the insurrection reached Nero on the anniversary of his mother's murder, but neither fact gave the slightest concern to the Emperor, who, interrupted at supper by the news, did not even leave his feast, and thereafter remained at Naples for an entire week, without taking any steps to meet the danger which threatened. But at the end of that period he was roused by a proclamation of Vindex, in which the Emperor was mentioned as "Ahenobarbus," and was railed at as "a pitiful harper"; at which Nero was so mortified and enraged that he hastily returned to Rome—not indeed to defend his Empire, but merely to refute the accusations against his want of skill in an art upon his proficiency in which he had so prided himself. When the news became more ominous he did call his friends together for a hasty consultation; but no action having been determined upon, he carelessly busied himself with the examination of some new musical instruments, which seem to have been the prototype of the pneumatic organ. But in the midst of his frivolity came word that Galba and the Spanish province had declared against him; upon hearing which, in a paroxysm of fear and rage, he tore his clothes and ran screaming about the palace, beating his head and crying that it was all over with him and that his Empire was lost. Encouraged, however, by his old nurse and by the presence of his associates in vice, he once more rallied and deliberately attempted to bury the whole affair in oblivion, by an abandonment to the luxurious wickedness for which the Golden House had become a synonym. But it was too late. Horrible dreams disturbed his sleeping hours; his mother beaten to death by his orders, the murdered Octavia and the other victims of his

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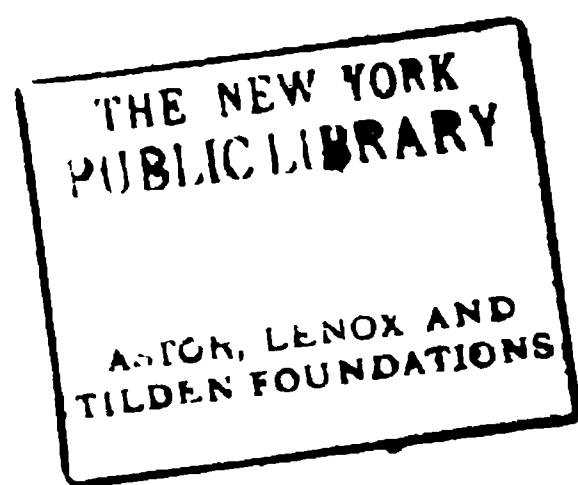
he ordered a grave to be dug, of the proper size and lined by pieces of white marble, if such could be found. Then he took up the two daggers which the eager slaves had furnished him, but after feeling their points, whimpered "the fatal hour is not yet come," and laid them down. Then beseeching one of the slaves to weep and lament, he entreated another to set him the example by killing himself, crying every now and then, "Oh, what an artist is about to perish!" But the prætorians were on his track; during his flight he had been recognized by an old soldier, who caught a glimpse of the Emperor's face when, his horse having shied at a dead body in the road, the handkerchief about his head had become disarranged. The horsemen, who had orders to take him alive, were heard approaching. Quoting a line from the "Iliad,"—

"The noise of swift-heeled steeds assails my ears,"—

he tremblingly carried a dagger to his throat; it was driven in by Epaphroditus, his secretary, and Nero fell to the ground just as the soldiers burst into the room. Applying his cloak to stanch the flow of blood, the centurion pretended that he had come to the assistance of the Emperor, whereupon the latter replied, "It is too late; is this your loyalty?" And immediately after pronouncing these words he expired, with his eyes fixed and starting out of his head, to the terror of all who beheld him.

Thus on the ninth (or eleventh) of June, 69 A. D., in the thirty-second year of his life, miserably perished the last of the Cæsars—one hundred and twelve years after that other death at the foot of Pompey's statue had at once made possible the imperial system and marked the elevation of its one great ruling family, of which Nero was the

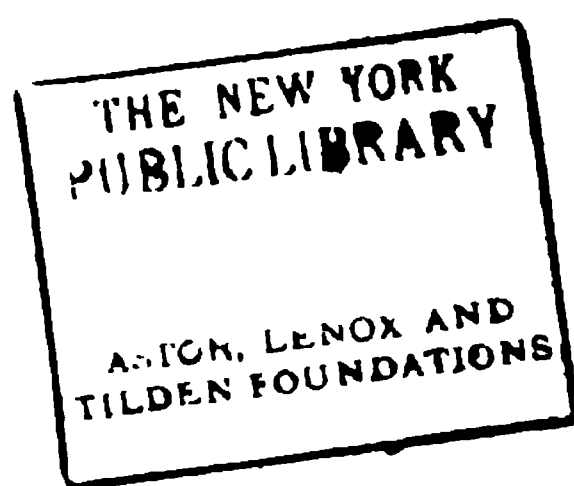
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last distorted product. During that interval we have seen sixty-five Cæsars by birth and marriage put to death by the sovereign power; while of all those born in the Julian line, excepting such as perished in infancy, history tells us of only five (and there cannot have been more than thirteen) who died from natural causes. Truly a bountiful heritage from the unnatural creation of Livia and the vices to which it naturally paved the way, and one which if it could have been foreseen would doubtless have brought new honors to the "Augusta" from the Senate and the people whose conception of virtue had been swallowed up in the vices of an unholy imperialism.

No relative remained to perform the last mournful offices for Nero, whose name was declared accursed by the Senate, and whose statues were overthrown in the veritable saturnalia of joy to which the city gave itself up when the tidings came from Phaon's villa. But the once beautiful Acte, who tradition tells us had become a believer with the gentle Octavia, and the sparing of whose life by Nero seems to have been the one white spot in his history—she it was who gathered up all that was mortal of the "divine artist" and deposited the remains in the family tomb on the Pincian Hill. As a family distinction the name of Cæsar had passed away forever, remaining in use thereafter only as a badge of sovereignty. And for a moment, at least, before taking another mad plunge, Rome and the Roman dependencies must have breathed more freely when the last tyrant of the great Julian line disappeared from mortal view.



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teen died from natural causes, and eight died from causes unknown.

Assuming that all of those as to whose death history is silent died from natural causes, and excluding eight who died in infancy, it appears that more than two out of three of the imperial race came to a violent end. The proportion is far more significant when confined to the *male* representatives of the family; of the twenty-eight Julian princes not more than seven died from natural causes. Of these seven, four (the infant son of Tiberius and Julia, the infant son of Germanicus and Agrippina, Caius, grandson of Tiberius, and Drusus, son of Claudius) died in infancy; a fifth, Nero's father, only escaped execution by an opportune attack of dropsy; while a sixth, Barbatus Messala, father of Messalina, is included among those whose death is unmentioned. So that of all the males of that great family which swayed the Roman world for nearly a century and a half, Augustus, the first Emperor, may be considered the only one who was permitted to die quietly in bed.¹

As to the remaining fifty-two individuals whose names have appeared in the foregoing pages by reason of their affinity to the imperial family, two Cæsars by adoption were murdered, and the third fell in war; five wives of Julian princes, not of the blood, were put to death, a like number died from natural causes, and the death of eight is unmentioned; nine of the seventeen husbands who were not of the blood of their Cæsarean spouses were murdered, six came to a natural end, and the death of two is untraced; while fourteen fathers, mothers, previous husbands or wives, or children of previous marriages of those who braved an imperial marriage met death by reason of such alliance.

¹ Even his death was not entirely free from suspicion of poisoning. See *ante*, page 44.

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Next to the bare fact of this great domestic slaughter, which of course first impresses us in a study of the Cæsars, we are struck by the progressiveness of imperial criminality as indicated by the family murders.

During the rule of the first Cæsar, only one violent death occurred in the family—that of its illustrious founder; whose assassination, moreover, was not a family affair.¹ In this period, also, Pompey the Great was the only relative by marriage who came to a violent end; and although he fell in war with his father-in-law, Cæsar was not responsible for his assassination, which was accomplished by one of Pompey's own centurions, assisted by Egyptian slaves. While the undisputed tenure of power of the Dictator continued scarcely two years, even by his severest critics it will be conceded that the brevity of that tenure had not the slightest effect upon the subject now under consideration. If he had ruled a lifetime, the result would have been unchanged; for there existed an impassable gulf between domestic murder and the devoted son of Aurelia, the tender father of Julia, the manly lover who refused to divorce Cornelia at the beck of the terrible Sylla.

The supremacy of Augustus may be said to have covered a period of about forty years; during which interval four Cæsars by birth and five relatives by marriage succumbed to the passions born of a consuming thirst for power. Of these, three were destroyed by Livia, to clear the way for her own son's succession; while six were put to death by Augustus,² from motives of fear, preservation of his power, and revenge.

During the twenty-three years of the second Emperor's

¹ The charge that Brutus was Cæsar's illegitimate son seems to be unfounded.

² Including Antony and Cleopatra, who were suicides.

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From the subjoined tables,¹ which are based upon the preceding chapters, it appears that of fifteen male Cæsars by birth who married, ten married near relatives of the blood; while of twenty-three female Cæsars who married, nine married Cæsars by birth.² The physical, mental, and moral effect upon the race can best be considered by a comparison between the children—both as to their number and character—of these marriages and those of the Cæsars, both male and female, whose wives and husbands were not of the Julian blood.

Of the ten Julian intermarriages, six were unproductive of children, of whom thirteen resulted from the remaining four, including that of Germanicus and Agrippina, the number of whose offspring was nine.

Of the eight Cæsars³ whose wives were not of the Julian blood, history mentions eight children, while Tacitus speaks indirectly of at least two others.⁴ Only one of these eight marriages resulted unproductively.

Of the eighteen Julian females by birth who married outside the family,⁵ not more than six failed to produce children, of whom at least thirty in the aggregate were born of the marriages in question.

It thus appears that while *six* of the *ten* Julian intermarriages were unproductive of offspring, a like result occurred in but *seven* of the *twenty-six* instances where only one of the contracting parties was a Cæsar by birth. Again,

¹ See Tables V, VI, VII.

² The apparent discrepancy is accounted for by the fact that Drusilla, daughter of Germanicus, was twice married to cousins: Caligula and Lepidus.

³ Three of these eight married both relatives and strangers to the blood.

⁴ The children of Rubellius Plautus. *Ante*, page 71. They have not been included here.

⁵ Four of these married Cæsars by birth, as well as strangers to the blood.

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not counting the marriage of Germanicus and Agrippina, the number of whose children was so very exceptional as to warrant its exclusion in drawing a comparison of this kind,—especially where no similar abnormal factor exists on the other side,—it appears that while nine Julian intermarriages produced only four children, twenty-six outside alliances added thirty-eight children to the imperial race. And if the five children of Julia and Agrippa be excluded from the one class as a sort of counterbalance to the exclusion of the Germanici from the other, the results as to the number of offspring would still be significantly disproportionate.

But it may be said—and with a large degree of truth—that even if fewer Cæsars by birth had intermarried, with a consequent increase in the number of their descendants, the fact would in no wise have prevented or even retarded the inevitable destruction of the family. Indeed, as already observed, at certain periods in the Julian history more Cæsars would have merely implied more fuel for the flames, so that domestic murder would have raged more fiercely, and the destruction of the imperial house would, if anything, have been accelerated. And yet who can say what possibilities and advantages might not have resulted to the Julian line from a more frequent infusion of new and vigorous Roman blood, like that of Agrippa and Silanus? Such, for example, as the birth of another Silanus, who with all the courage and character of Lucius Junius, and a little better fortune than befell that unfortunate youth, might have destroyed Nero, revolutionized the Empire, and reëstablished the supremacy of his house upon the solid foundations of humanity, purity, and truth.

But speculation of this sort is not essential to the conclusion that the too frequent intermarriages of the Cæsars

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contributed largely to the extinction of their race. For whether or not affected by the disproportionate number of offspring, the character of the children born of the two classes of marriages proved to be a matter of vital importance to the duration of the house of Cæsar.

The difference in moral and mental traits of these two classes of offspring is well recognized both generally by physiologists and in the particular case by every one having the most casual acquaintance with the history of the imperial family of Cæsar. Outside of those descendants of Augustus and Octavia whose parents were not nearly related, there existed an undoubted line of mental aberration in the Julian house, which in the case of Caligula and Nero developed into undoubted insanity. Now the apparently invariable tendency of a totally unrestrained mental unsoundness seems to be in the direction of some sort of vice. And in the absence of either moral or religious anchorage—the old religion having lost its primitive grasp and Christianity not yet arrived, while morality and sanctity had become scarcely more than terms—it was perhaps to be expected that even where insanity might not be positively predicated, as this mental weakness was present in a greater or less degree, its possessors, open to all the unbridled license of imperial power, would exhibit a corresponding tendency both to the depravity of their ancestors and the vices peculiar to their own surroundings and intimate associations, public and private.

With a few noteworthy exceptions this conclusion is borne out by the facts, and in part accounts for some of those monstrous and shocking deeds which otherwise would remain incomprehensible. On the one side, among the offspring of Cæsars whose blood was crossed in marriage, we find the first Julia, the two Antonias, the Mar-

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celli, Germanicus and Agrippina, the two eldest sons of Julia and Agrippa, Rubellius Plautus and the two generations of Silani; the lives of whom were, for that period, remarkably free from vice and evil tendencies, and of whom several on occasion displayed what would at any stage of social and moral attainment be considered a notable elevation of character. On the other hand, among the children of the family intermarriages were Caligula and Nero, Messalina, Julia and Drusilla, the sisters of Caligula, and Agrippina the younger. The first was an undoubted madman, the second presumably so; while Messalina certainly, and Julia and Drusilla, if guilty of the offences gravely recorded by Suetonius, must at least have suffered from what has been not inaptly termed "moral paralysis," the existence of which it is difficult to conceive without presupposing some sort of mental unsoundness. As for the mother of Nero, she was, it is true, almost a genius. But her genius was of the Machiavellian order, between which and insanity the line must be very fine—a "nice barrier," indeed.

Exceptions to the proposition, however, readily occur to the mind in the case of Julia, the daughter of Augustus, her son Agrippa and her daughter Julia, and the second Livia, who, although the offspring of cross-marriages, exhibited something of that same moral lesion displayed by the daughter of Germanicus; the third Emperor, who, although the result of an admixture of Julian and Claudian blood, was by some thought to have been as mentally deficient as any descendant of imperial intermarriage; and finally Octavia and Britannicus, classed among the best and purest of their race—and yet the children of this same imbecile Claudius and his abominable Empress cousin! But upon reflection these apparent exceptions are seen to

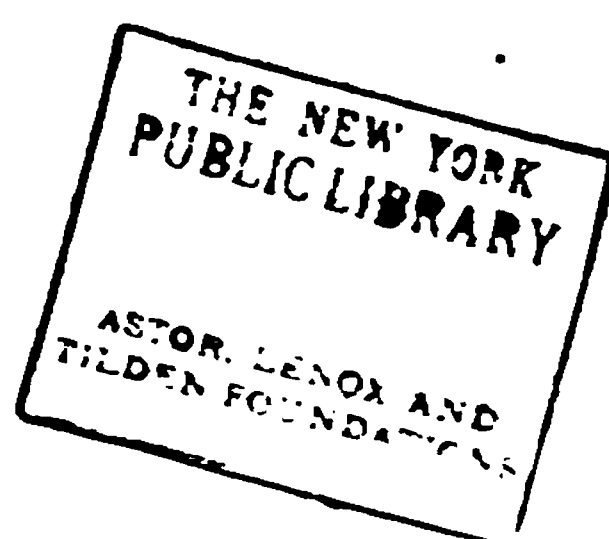
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be of slight consequence. In addition to the doctrine of *exceptio*, it is to be remembered that the fact of white fowls occasionally having dark chickens does not affect the rule that black fowls ordinarily produce black chickens. In the case of Claudius, also, it is uncertain whether his mental infirmity was constitutional or the result of abusive treatment following a severe illness in childhood. As for Britannicus, it has already been observed that he died too young to confidently predicate upon his actual character; his terrible cousin in early life seems to have been quite as promising as the virtuous and lamented young Claudian. Octavia alone remains to contradict our general conclusion; and while science may, by some mysterious principle of atavism, explain to its own satisfaction, mankind will yet wonder how the union of Claudius and Messalina could produce that pure and virtuous daughter of the Cæsars, in whom had united three streams of the Julian blood, than which none more tainted with vice and impurity ever coursed in Roman veins.

It remains only to inquire how far the children of intermarriages and the offspring of outside imperial alliances were respectively responsible for the domestic murders by which the race of Cæsar was destroyed. Although it is not pretended that the answer will furnish a true comparison between the criminal tendencies of the two kinds of offspring, it will at least be a sort of test of the general proposition that too frequent intermarriage contributed in no small degree to the downfall of the family.

is of the tables already referred to, it
: thirty-five Cæsars by birth who came
four were killed by strangers, two by
of whose ancestors was of the Julian
by persons who had married into the

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family. As against this total number of seventeen deaths, eighteen Cæsars by birth were put to death by the descendants of imperial intermarriages, who in the same way murdered seventeen relatives by marriage as against thirteen destroyed by all the others. To put it more directly, Augustus and Claudius, each of whom had only one parent of the Julian blood, together destroyed two blood relatives and six relatives by marriage—in all, eight;¹ while Messalina, Agrippina, Caligula, and Nero, the children of intermarriages among the Cæsars, put to death thirty-five in the aggregate, of whom eighteen were Cæsars by birth and seventeen relatives by marriage.

And thus we have finally arrived at the inevitable conclusion that, as in the case of so many humbler and less pretentious families, the house of Cæsar was destroyed from within and by its own vices alone. From the highest pitch of nobility and grandeur it fell to the lowest depths of shame and infamy; until, at last, in the imperial city it had created, and in the shadow of the magnificent Golden House which was to have been its home for generations, its last drop of blood was yielded in expiation of the family crimes. In the mad and utterly selfish struggle for individual supremacy, its sons and daughters had deliberately selected domestic murder as their most available handmaid; and in the unlicensed enjoyment and unrestrained abuse of the power and privileges thus fearfully acquired, they had broken down the bars of domestic purity, they had violated the sanctity of marriage, they had trampled upon every law, divine and human, and finally, through an insane pride in the pretended “divinity” of the Julian line,

¹ In this computation Claudius is charged with the death of only one Cæsar, as it is conceded that of all the others put to death during his reign Messalina was the true murderer.

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they had endeavored to perpetuate their worn-out race through repeated intermarriages. God and Nature again intervened; and as the death of the first Cæsar was the inexorable demand of social evolution, in whose triumphant progress the individual who has performed his part, whether relatively great or small, and by whose continued presence events are retarded, is ruthlessly brushed aside; so the final extinction of the Julian race was the ultimate penalty exacted by Nature and its Creator of those who, by presuming to extirpate virtue and deify themselves, displayed the mad ambition of subjecting all mankind to their own lawless desires. Another and a mightier force was gathering, another and an infinitely grander sovereignty was preparing, and it became necessary that the last vestiges of what had almost become an accepted family apotheosis under the shelter of a dangerous imperialism, should be dislodged from men's minds and swept away into the abyss, before Christianity could assume its eternal place as the moral and religious balance of the universe. The first Cæsar had lived and was gone. Christ had died—and was come again. Both had been misunderstood—as Emerson says, every great spirit always has been misunderstood; both were to regain their rightful places in the history of the world and in the story of the Spirit. But those other Cæsars, upon the crumbled ruins of whose house the sovereignty of Peter was to rise—what shall be said of them? We believe that as long as virtue is seen to be fair and vice remains hideous, the very names of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero will be esteemed abominable by mankind; while the good which appears not unabundantly during the last years of Augustus cannot avail to entirely overcome our horror and detestation of the cruelty and wickedness which disfigured the early

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part of his reign. In the dramatic words of a great modern artist, for the most part they passed “as a whirlwind, as a storm, as a fire, as war or death passes; but the basilica of Peter rules till now from the Vatican heights the city and the world.”

NOTE TO CHAPTER XII

IN his delightful "Tragedy of the Cæsars," although modestly termed by the author a mere "iconographic essay," Mr. S. Baring-Gould has made a serious attempt to vindicate the character of the Emperor Tiberius, and incidentally of the Empress Livia Augusta and of Agrippina, the mother of Nero. In the introductory chapter the author states that his study was inspired by the portrait-busts of the early Cæsars in the Italian museums, and in the body of the text appears the following:

"In the galleries of Rome, of Naples and Florence one sees the beautiful face of Tiberius, with that intellectual brow and sensitive mouth, looking pleadingly at the passer-by, as though seeking for some who would unlock the secret of his story and vindicate his much-aspersed memory."

Gallantly indeed has the author responded to that mute appeal of the dead Cæsar, and it must be admitted that if Tiberius can be successfully defended, and the character of Agrippina the younger can be rehabilitated, the defence and the right to rehabilitation have been established in the pages of his work.

To secure a verdict, however, it is necessary not only to refute the unanimous testimony of the ancient writers,—Tacitus, Dion Cassius, Suetonius, and the others,—but as well to overcome almost the entire consensus of modern historical opinion. The author accomplishes it to his own entire satisfaction by first disposing of all the early historians and biographers except the son-in-law of Agricola, with the omnium blow that they are unworthy of credence,

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their stories being founded on no better evidence than "Roman gossip and lampoons"; whereupon it only remains to perfect a most beautiful case of physiognomy *vs.* Tacitus, in which to the honor of the advocate be it said, the argument as a whole is more ingenuous than ingenious. Although a basis of fact is attempted, the strongest part of the author's contention seems to be that all those beautiful busts of Tiberius with the intellectual brow, the sensitive mouth, and above all the "pleading, sorrowful look," *cannot* indicate such a character as Tacitus describes. "There is in it [the face of Tiberius] not a trace of coarseness, of sensuality, of cruelty;" while he does not share "the opinion of Bernoulli that hard thoughts slumber under the brows." In the same way, referring to Nero's mother, who is characterized as "one of the grandest women of history," he says: "When I showed photographs of this statue of Agrippina to Mr. Conrad Dressler, the sculptor, the exclamation that escaped him was, 'What a lady, what a true and royal lady!' And that is the impression the pure, proud, and refined face makes on all attentive students."

The "Tragedy of the Cæsars" displays plainly the educated and enthusiastic physiognomist. As a scholarly and charming essay on the Cæsarean busts, it is both a valuable contribution to the student and a delightful *morceau* for those who are compelled to read as they run. But to the ordinary reader, familiar with the "Annals," and at all appreciative of its author's character, dignity, and fine sense of loyalty to historic truth, to overcome one's conceptions of Tiberius, Agrippina, and the others, which are based largely upon the express statements of this incomparable history, will require far weightier evidence than the deductions of the physiognomist and the phrenologist

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—especially when the first proposition rests upon a more or less unattested marble bust some two thousand years old. And, for that matter, however pure and refined the features and expression of the second Emperor, accepting the picture of Tacitus as fact, his would not be the only case where the countenance of an angel has been linked with the deeds of a devil.¹

Any attempt to vindicate Tiberius inevitably compels a defence of Livia and Agrippina Minor, and at the same time necessitates bearing down upon Octavia, Agrippina the elder, and Germanicus. We are therefore not surprised to find that in Mr. Baring-Gould's essay Livia is freed from the charge of domestic murder whatsoever, and the mother of Nero acquitted of all similar indictments, including the charge of poisoning Claudius. Moreover, in order to clear the character of Agrippina, it has been necessary to relieve Nero from the charge of destroying Britannicus. For it will be remembered that the motive of Nero's alleged crime (as related by Tacitus²) was Agrippina's angry threat to overturn her son by enlisting the soldiers in the interest of Britannicus. The surest, if not the only way to dispose of such a reflection upon one of the "grandest women in history" was to prove that Nero did not murder his cousin. The entire contest between physiognomist and historian might well rest upon the case of Britannicus, as presented in the essay under consideration³ and in the pages of Tacitus. Earlier in the argument the latter is charged with lack of information; again, with having derived his facts from the partisan memoirs

¹ Milady Clarik, in *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, is a striking example of this suggestion. Fiction, it is true; but the fiction of the great Dumas is the indisputable history of human nature.

² *Annals*, xiii. 13 et seq. ³ *Tragedy of the Cæsars*, page 554.

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of Agrippina. But this is the "last ditch." The murder of Britannicus must be disproved or the beautiful tenement which has been erected for Agrippina will disappear; and in his desperate plight our author does not scruple to insinuate deliberate misrepresentation on the part of the great historian. "It is more probable," he says, "that *Tacitus feigned the threat of Agrippina in order to give plausibility to his tragic story of a crime which he felt was without motive.*"¹ And then, after asserting that we must receive the stories of poison with the greatest mistrust, and ridiculing the other motives attributed to Nero, he declares it incredible both that all the details of the alleged poisoning could be given with such minuteness and that the hitherto amiable and harmless Emperor could have contrived and carried out so hideous a fratricide; and concludes by saying that "Seneca, moreover, must have been the most despicable of men had he written his treatise on Clemency with the knowledge that he whom he praised therein was stained with his brother's blood."

The author's attempt to strengthen his argument by a conclusion drawn from the conduct of Seneca is unfortunate. The mind naturally reverts to the part played by this moral preceptor in the murder of Agrippina—in regard to which, by the way, our author's usual ingenuousness is not manifested. When the first failure of Anicetus was reported and Nero summoned his friends for counsel, Seneca, according to the "Tragedy," "knew not what to say, what to advise, and when Burrhus was bidden to send soldiers to kill the Empress, he bluntly replied that the prætorians would never draw the sword against the daughter of Germanicus." But from whom came the suggestion

¹ Compare with a statement of Tacitus as to the sources of his information, *Annals*, xi. 27, quoted *ante*, page 115.

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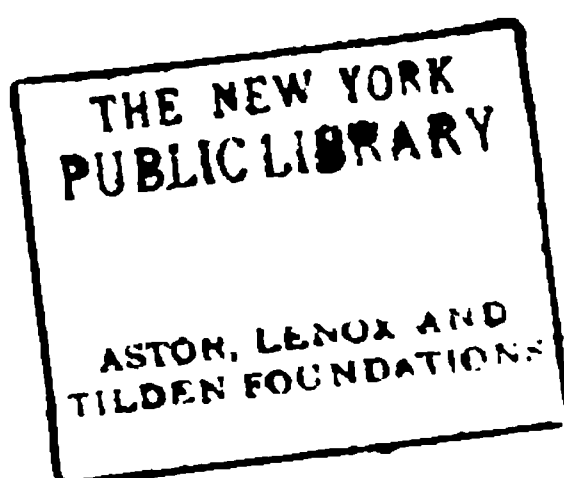
that Burrhus should be called upon to perform the evil deed? According to Tacitus, it came from *the virtuous Seneca himself!*¹ The charge is directly made in the same paragraph which contains the reply of Burrhus, quoted as sufficiently proven by our author, who however apparently considers the great historian untrustworthy when it comes to a reflection upon Seneca, who was too astonishingly virtuous to have praised in his treatise a possible fratricide. As for the suggestion of incredibility that Nero could have committed the crime and that its details could have been so minutely known, what is there in it more incredible than that this abominable young egoist could have murdered his own mother, and that posterity could have information of the veriest details of that terrible crime, as related by our author himself?

The murder of Postumus Agrippa at the threshold of the reign of Tiberius is another stubborn fact to be explained in any vindication of his adoptive brother. It is admitted that Tiberius was the only one to profit by Agrippa's death, that the hapless grandson of Augustus was slain by a centurion acting, as he afterwards declared in his official report, by command of Livia's son, and that the proposed investigation before the Senate was checked by the Augusta. Now let the unbiassed reader turn to the first book of the "Annals," where the circumstances are dispassionately related, and then consider the proposition gravely advanced by our author, who, unable to get away from the facts, adopts the theory that Agrippa was put to death by the orders of *Augustus*, to save Rome from civil war!

If ever a cruel and crafty nature betrayed itself beyond the possibility of subsequent contradiction or expla-

¹ *Annals*, xiv. 7.

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nation, it was manifested in the destruction of Sejanus by the second Emperor. Decoyed into the Senate by false assurances on the part of the Emperor's personal lieutenant, that he was to be invested with the tribunitian authority, the unfortunate though guilty minister unsuspectingly listened to a long and purposely involved communication, which, after first referring to Sejanus in not unkind terms, branched off upon other subjects, and to the unbounded astonishment of all, abruptly closed by ordering the arrest of the favorite, who was at once savagely butchered under the directions of his imperial master's personal envoy.

The facts are not denied by our author, whose explanation is that this maliciously cruel letter was written by the Emperor in a tumult of nervous terrors and with his mind unhinged by loss of confidence in the man he had so blindly loved. But what can be thought of the character of one whose love would seek revenge so diabolically planned? And indeed what can be thought of the "love" which this refined and sensitive Emperor—he of the "intellectual brow," of the tender, womanly countenance, which betrayed so plainly a great "kindliness restrained by timidity"—had cherished for this notorious ministerial bandit during all the years of his savage career? It was rather the love of a tiger for his marauding associate—a love from which might be expected just such fruits as appeared, when following the shameful indignities which during three days were publicly bestowed upon the corpse of Sejanus, his innocent little children were destroyed under circumstances of such unutterable horror that the mind shrinks from the very thought of the story as told by the historian.

Our author's views as to the character and death of the elder Agrippina, whose "ambition and blind hate" he de-

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in his old age, then we must suppose he was insane," says the author of the "Tragedy." This he refuses to do. But in the case of Agrippina and Drusus he can account for the difficulties and reconcile the apparent contradictions only by predicating insanity; and to this he sees no objection.

The noble Octavia, beloved by Augustus, lauded by Plutarch, and as the writer had supposed universally conceded to have been a woman of extraordinary merit and generosity of temperament—she also suffers from the demonstrations of physiognomy. Her son Marcellus, it will be remembered, met an untimely death, soon after his marriage to Julia, the daughter of Augustus; and his supposed poisoning was among the crimes laid at the door of the Augusta. Says the author of the "Tragedy"¹: "The intensity of the grief and disappointment of Octavia at the loss of her son on whom she had not only set her heart, but also her ambition, was, if not greater than that of Augustus, at least more demonstrative and less measured. . . . It was a short step from frantic grief and disappointed rage, to make accusation against the guiltless Livia of having contrived the death of Marcellus. *If the reader will look back at the face of Octavia he will see that under all the heaviness of expression, there lurks an ugly unreasoning temper.*"

Whatever may be the expression of the Louvre bust, "an ugly unreasoning temper" had no place in the character of the considerate, unselfish, and generous-minded Octavia, as sketched by Plutarch, and once more we must decline to conform a long-cherished mental image, originally outlined by the fathers of biography and history, to the unsupported deductions of an inexact science.

¹ Page 174.

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FROM WHICH NERO WATCHED THE BURNING OF THE CITY

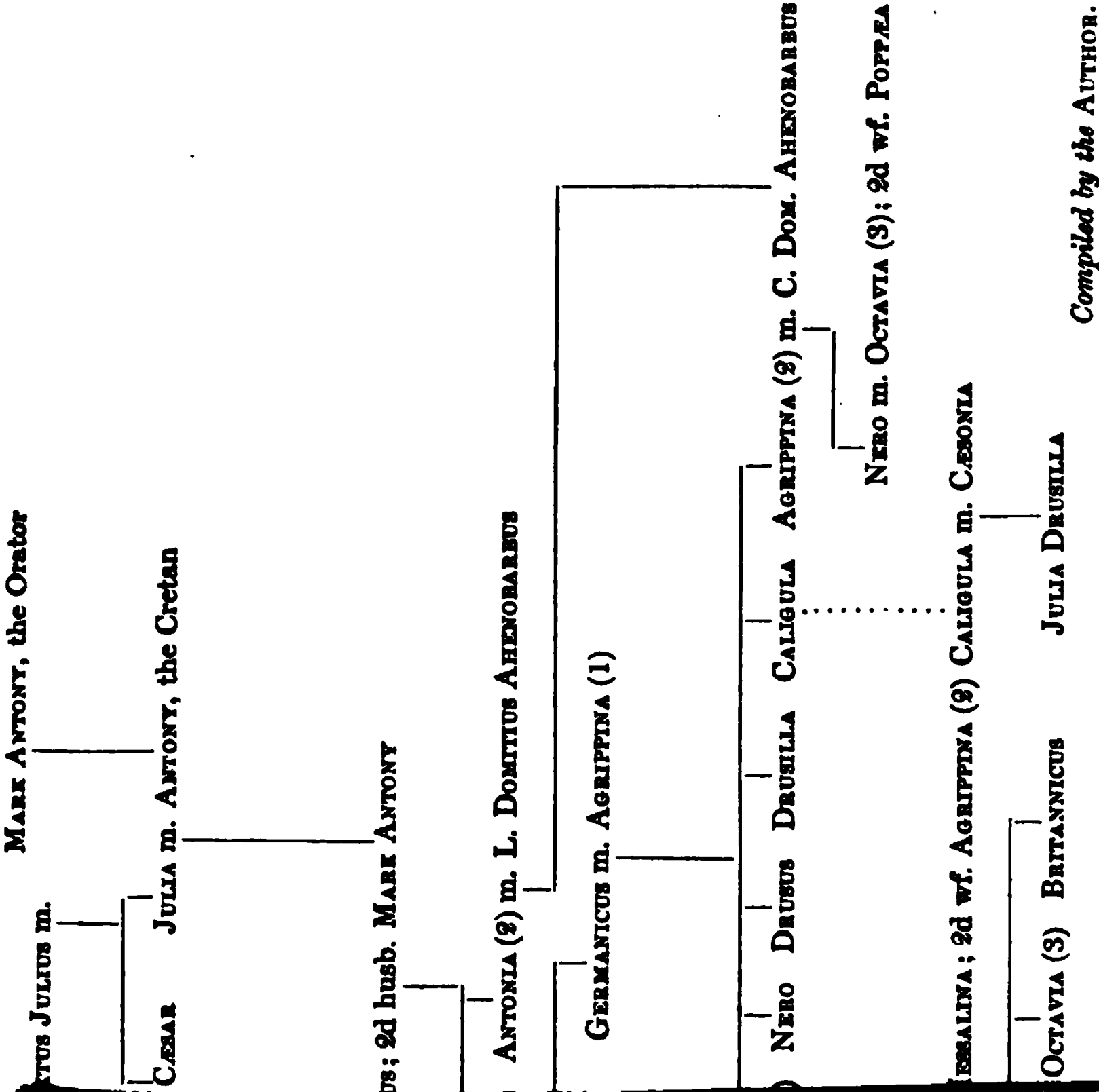
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NOTE TO CHAPTER XII

But however tempting the subject, the limits of this sketch forbid a further discussion of Mr. Baring-Gould's fascinating study. Enough has been stated to suggest the line of his argument, which must be read in its entirety to be appreciated—and to which, as the writer is convinced, there must then be returned the verdict of "Unproven."

CÆSARS



Compiled by the AUTHOR.

APPENDIX

TABLE I

VICTIMS OF THE CÆSARS

JULIUS CÆSAR. The founder of the Family.

Assassinated by Cassius, Brutus, and others.

CNEIUS POMPEY MAGNUS. CÆSAR'S son-in-law.

Assassinated by one of his centurions and Egyptian soldiers.

MARCELLUS. Son-in-law of AUGUSTUS.

Destroyed by Livia Augusta.

CAIUS CÆSAR. Son of JULIA and AGRIPPA.

Destroyed by Livia Augusta.

LUCIUS CÆSAR. Son of JULIA and AGRIPPA.

Destroyed by Livia Augusta.

CÆSARIO. Reputed son of JULIUS CÆSAR and CLEOPATRA.

Put to death by Augustus.

LUCIUS PAULUS. Husband of JULIA, granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

Put to death by Augustus.

MARK ANTONY. Brother-in-law of AUGUSTUS.

Committed suicide.

CLEOPATRA. Wife of ANTONY.

Committed suicide.

JULIUS ANTONIUS. Son of ANTONY.

Put to death by Augustus.

ANTYLLUS. Son of ANTONY.

Put to death by Augustus.

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JULIA. Daughter of **AUGUSTUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius.

JULIA. Granddaughter of **AUGUSTUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius.

POSTUMUS AGRIPPA. Brother of the last-mentioned.

Put to death by Tiberius.

GERMANICUS. Nephew of **TIBERIUS**.

Put to death by Livia.

NERO. Son of **GERMANICUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius and Sejanus.

DRUSUS. Son of **GERMANICUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius and Sejanus.

TIBERIUS THE EMPEROR.

Put to death by Macro and Caligula.

DRUSUS MINOR. Son of **TIBERIUS**.

Put to death by Livia the younger.

LIVIA. Wife of the last-mentioned and daughter of **GERMANICUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius.

AGRIPPINA. Granddaughter of **AUGUSTUS** and wife of **GERMANICUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius.

ASINIUS GALLUS. Second husband of **VIPSANIA AGRIPPINA**, the wife of **TIBERIUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius.

ÆMILIA LEPIDA. Wife of **DRUSUS**, the son of **GERMANICUS**.

Put to death by Tiberius.

CLAUDIA PULCHRA (?).

Put to death by Tiberius.

TITUS OLLIUS. Father of **POPPÆA**.

Put to death by Sejanus.

APPENDIX

TIBERIUS GEMELLUS. Grandson of **TIBERIUS.**

Put to death by Caligula.

LEPIDUS. Great-grandson of **AUGUSTUS.**

Put to death by Caligula.

CALIGULA THE EMPEROR.

Put to death by Chærea.

ANTONIA. Mother of **GERMANICUS.**

Put to death by Caligula.

CLAUDIA. Daughter of the Emperor **CLAUDIUS.**

Put to death by Claudius.

JULIA DRUSILLA. Daughter of **CALIGULA.**

Put to death by Lupus.

CÆSONIA. Wife of **CALIGULA.**

Put to death by Lupus.

PTOLEMY. Grandson of **CLEOPATRA.**

Put to death by Caligula.

JULIA. Daughter of **GERMANICUS.**

Put to death by Claudius and Messalina.

JULIA. Granddaughter of **TIBERIUS.**

Put to death by Claudius and Messalina.

MESSALINA. Wife of **CLAUDIUS.**

Put to death by Narcissus.

LEPIDA. Aunt of **NERO.**

Put to death by Agrippina.

CLAUDIUS THE EMPEROR.

Put to death by Agrippina.

LUCIUS SILANUS. Great-great-grandson of **AUGUSTUS.**

Put to death by Agrippina.

LOLLIA PAULINA. Wife of **CALIGULA.**

Put to death by Agrippina.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

CNEIUS POMPEY. Son-in-law of CLAUDIUS.

Put to death by Claudius and Messalina.

MARCUS VINICIUS. Husband of JULIA, the daughter of GERMANICUS.

Put to death by Messalina.

APPIUS JUNIUS SILANUS. Husband of ÆMILIA LEPIDA, great-granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

Put to death by Claudius and Messalina.

PASSIENUS. Husband of DOMITIA LEPIDA (and of AGRIPPINA MINOR).

Put to death by Agrippina.

CRASSUS FRUGI. Father of CNEIUS POMPEY.

Put to death by Claudius and Messalina.

SCRIBONIA. Mother of CNEIUS POMPEY.

Put to death by Claudius and Messalina.

POPPÆA SABINA. Mother of the Empress POPPÆA.

Put to death by Claudius and Messalina.

MARCUS JUNIUS SILANUS. Great-great-grandson of AUGUSTUS.

Put to death by Agrippina.

TORQUATUS SILANUS. Brother of MARCUS JUNIUS SILANUS.

Put to death by Nero.

LUCIUS JUNIUS SILANUS. Great-great-great-grandson of AUGUSTUS.

Put to death by Nero.

BRITANNICUS. Son of the Emperor CLAUDIUS.

Put to death by Nero.

RUBELLIUS PLAUTUS. Great-grandson of TIBERIUS.

Put to death by Nero.

AGRIPPINA MINOR. Mother of NERO.

Put to death by Nero.

APPENDIX

OCTAVIA. Daughter of CLAUDIUS and wife of NERO.

Put to death by Nero.

ANTONIA. Daughter of CLAUDIUS.

Put to death by Nero.

DOMITIA LEPIDA. Aunt of NERO.

Put to death by Nero.

POPPÆA. Wife of NERO.

Put to death by Nero.

ANTISTIA. Wife of RUBELLIUS PLAUTUS.

Put to death by Nero.

CAIUS FAUSTUS SYLLA. Son-in-law of CLAUDIUS.

Put to death by Nero.

RUFIOUS CRISPINUS. First husband of POPPÆA.

Put to death by Nero.

RUFINUS CRISPINUS. Son of POPPÆA.

Put to death by Nero.

ANTISTIUS VETUS. Father of the wife of PLAUTUS.

Put to death by Nero.

SEXTIA. Grandmother of the wife of PLAUTUS.

Put to death by Nero.

ATTICUS VESTINUS. First husband of the second MESSALINA, wife of NERO.

Put to death by Nero.

NERO.

Committed suicide.

TABLE II

PERISHED IN EXILE

LUCIUS ANTONY. Son of JULIA.

Banished by Augustus and died in exile.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

TABLE III

CÆSARS WHO DIED FROM NATURAL CAUSES

JULIA. Daughter of **JULIUS CÆSAR.**

AUGUSTUS.

DOMITIUS AHENOBARBUS. Father of **NERO.**

DRUSUS. Infant son of the Emperor **CLAUDIUS.**

CAIUS. Infant son of **DRUSUS MINOR.**

OCTAVIA MINOR. Sister of **AUGUSTUS.**

DRUSILLA. Wife of **CALIGULA.**

AUGUSTA. Infant child of **NERO.**

Infant Child of **JULIA** and **POMPEY THE GREAT.**

Infant Son of **JULIA** and **TIBERIUS.**

Infant Son of **GERMANICUS.**

Infant Daughter of **GERMANICUS.**

Infant Daughter of **GERMANICUS.**

LIVIA AUGUSTA.

LIVIA MEDULLINA. Wife of **CALIGULA.**

VIPSANIA AGRIPPINA. Wife of **TIBERIUS.**

JUNIA CLAUDIA. Wife of **CALIGULA.**

MESSALINA. Wife of **NERO.**

DRUSUS. Brother of **TIBERIUS.**

Drusus was killed by a fall from his horse while prosecuting the war in Germany.

APPENDIX

TABLE IV

CÆSARS WHOSE DEATH IS UNTRACED

VALERIUS MESSALA BARBATUS. Father of MESSALINA.

OCTAVIA MAJOR. Half-sister of AUGUSTUS.

ÆMILIA LEPIDA. Great-granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

MARCELLA MAJOR. Daughter of OCTAVIA.

MARCELLA MINOR. Daughter of OCTAVIA.

JUNIA LEPIDA. Great-great-granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

JUNIA CALVINA. Great-great-granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

ANTONIA. Daughter of OCTAVIA and grandmother of
NERO.

BARBATUS MESSALA. Husband of MARCELLA MINOR.

RUBELLIUS BLANDUS. Husband of JULIA, the granddaugh-
ter of TIBERIUS.

LIVIA ORESTILLA. Wife of CALIGULA.

COSSUTIA. Wife of JULIUS CÆSAR.

CORNELIA. Wife of JULIUS CÆSAR.

CALPURNIA. Wife of JULIUS CÆSAR.

CLAUDIA. Wife of AUGUSTUS.

SCRIBONIA. Wife of AUGUSTUS.

ÆLIA PÆTINA. Wife of CLAUDIUS.

PLAUTIA URGULANILLA. Wife of CLAUDIUS.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

TABLE V

CÆSARS WHO INTERMARRIED

MARCELLUS. Son of OCTAVIA.

Married Julia, daughter of Augustus.

CAIUS CÆSAR. Grandson of AUGUSTUS.

Married Livia, granddaughter of Octavia.

GERMANICUS. Grandson of OCTAVIA.

Married Agrippina, granddaughter of Augustus.

NERO. Son of GERMANICUS.

Married Julia, niece of Germanicus.

MARCUS LEPIDUS. Great-grandson of AUGUSTUS.

Married Drusilla, the great-granddaughter of Octavia.

CALIGULA. Great-grandson of both AUGUSTUS and OCTAVIA.

Married Drusilla, the great-granddaughter of Octavia and of Augustus.

CLAUDIUS. Grandson of OCTAVIA.

Married Messalina, also Agrippina, each a great-granddaughter of Octavia.

VALERIUS MESSALA BARBATUS. Grandson of OCTAVIA.

Married Lepida, the great-granddaughter of Octavia.

DOMITIUS AHENOBARBUS. Grandson of OCTAVIA.

Married Agrippina, great-granddaughter of Octavia.

NERO. Great-grandson of OCTAVIA.

Married Octavia, great-great-granddaughter of Octavia.

APPENDIX

TABLE VI

MALE CÆSARS WHO MARRIED OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

JULIUS CÆSAR.

AUGUSTUS.

MARCUS JUNIUS SILANUS. Great-great-grandson of AUGUSTUS.

DRUSUS. Son of GERMANICUS.

CALIGULA.

CLAUDIUS.

RUBELLIUS PLAUTUS. Grandson of TIBERIUS.

NERO.

TABLE VII

FEMALE CÆSARS WHO MARRIED OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

JULIA. Daughter of JULIUS CÆSAR.

Married Pompey the Great.

JULIA. Daughter of AUGUSTUS.

Married Agrippa; also Tiberius.

JULIA. Granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

Married Lucius Paulus.

ÆMILIA LEPIDA. Great-granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

Married Appius Junius Silanus.

ANTONIA MINOR. Daughter of OCTAVIA.

Married Drusus Major.

ANTONIA. Daughter of OCTAVIA.

Married Cneius Domitius Ahenobarbus.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

ANTONIA. Daughter of CLAUDIUS.

Married Pompey; also Sylla.

DOMITIA LEPIDA. NERO's aunt.

Married Passienus.

JULIA. Granddaughter of TIBERIUS.

Married Rubellius Plautus.

LIVIA MINOR.

Married Drusus Minor,¹

JUNIA LEPIDA. Great-great-granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

Married a son of Vitellius.

JUNIA CALVINA. Great-great-granddaughter of AUGUSTUS.

Married Cassius Longinus.

OCTAVIA MAJOR. Half-sister of AUGUSTUS.

Married

OCTAVIA MINOR. Sister of AUGUSTUS.

Married Antony and Marcellus.

MARCELLA MAJOR. Daughter of OCTAVIA.

Married Agrippa; also Julius Antonius.

MARCELLA MINOR. Daughter of OCTAVIA.

Married Barbatus Messala.

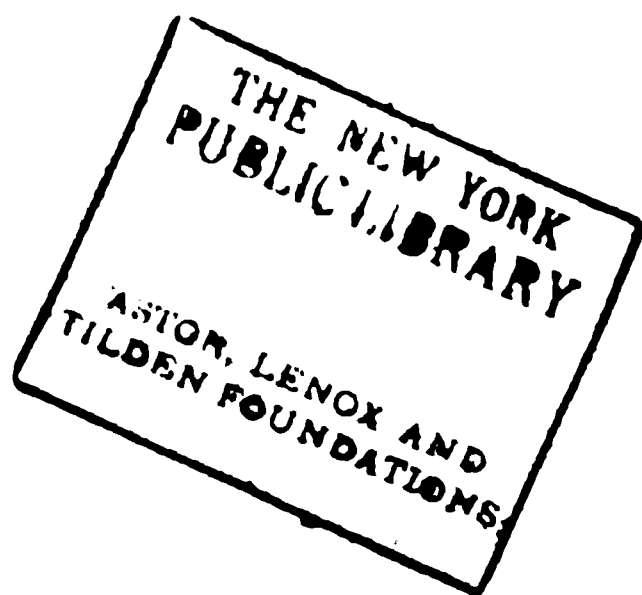
JULIA. Daughter of GERMANICUS.

Married Lucius Cassius.

¹ Livia and Drusus were cousins german through their fathers, Drusus and Tiberius.

PART II
THE IMPERIAL DISEASE





THE IMPERIAL DISEASE

CHAPTER I

COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

FROM GALBA TO MARCUS AURELIUS: 69-180 A. D.

GALBA: 69 A. D. The death of Nero, as observed by Tacitus, disclosed a secret of the Empire; namely, that an Emperor might be created elsewhere than at Rome. The disclosure was fatal in its consequences: again and again was the Empire torn by the bloody contention of rival claimants to the purple, whose standards had been raised in different parts of the state, and whose ambitions would, as a rule, have been stifled at birth if to Rome alone the choice of Cæsar had been consigned.

Servius Sulpicius Galba, the sixth Emperor, was born near Naples in the year 8 B. C. He was of noble extraction and is said to have been distantly related to the Empress Livia, although unconnected by birth or adoption with the family of the Cæsars.

The genealogical table which Galba erected for himself in the atrium of the palace proclaimed that on the side of his father the Emperor was descended from Jupiter, and on that of his mother from Pasiphaë, daughter of the Sun.

The first Emperor is alleged to have prophesied that Galba would taste the imperial dignity; while Tiberius, being told that the young man would come to be Emperor, although at an advanced age, exclaimed, "Let him live then, since that does not concern me."

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

Rising through the various grades of public office to the consulship, the province of Spain was at length bestowed upon him by Nero. The news of the insurrection in Gaul and the appeal of Vindex that he should head the revolt against the oppressor at Rome came to Galba in the spring of the year 68. Fear of his imperial master, however, restrained him from taking active steps until proclaimed by the army, whereupon he marched straight to Rome. His progress is said to have been marked with blood, while his entry into the city, accompanied by a Spanish legion, appears to have been signalized by the massacre of several thousands of unarmed men. However this may be, the old soldier, who seems not to have been wanting in stern virtues, speedily became unpopular with both prætorians and the people, and finally lost the support of even his few intimate friends. By the former (to whom he bluntly declared that he chose his soldiers and would not buy them) he was charged with a breach of faith in refusing the customary largess; and when the people learned that the Emperor was governed by incapable and profligate favorites, and that all the worst abuses of the last reign might be expected, with none of its liberality and extravagant spectacles, Galba's fate was sealed. The storm broke among the German legions; Otho, the profligate companion of the last Cæsar, was proclaimed by the prætorians, and the rebels marched on Rome. Accompanied by a single cohort which was faithful to him, the Emperor had left the palace and proceeded to the Forum. At the Curtian Lake,¹ near the rostra, he was met by the prætorians, who no sooner appeared than Galba's standard-bearer tore off the Emperor's image and dashed

¹ An inclosure in the Forum, which marked the spot where Curtius leaped into the lake once situated there.

COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

it to the ground; whereupon the soldiers with one voice declared for Otho. The men who carried Galba's litter let him fall to the ground and fled. Abandoned by all, the aged Emperor bravely presented his head, saying with a firm voice, "Strike if the good of the commonwealth demands it." He was speedily hacked to pieces, and his head borne in triumph to Otho, by whose orders it was fixed upon a spear and carried in derision around the camp. After being subjected to various indignities, his remains were buried in his own gardens near the Aurelian Way. He had reigned seven months. His character is perhaps fittingly described in the caustic remark of Tacitus: "The suffrages of mankind would have pronounced him worthy of empire, had he never made the experiment."

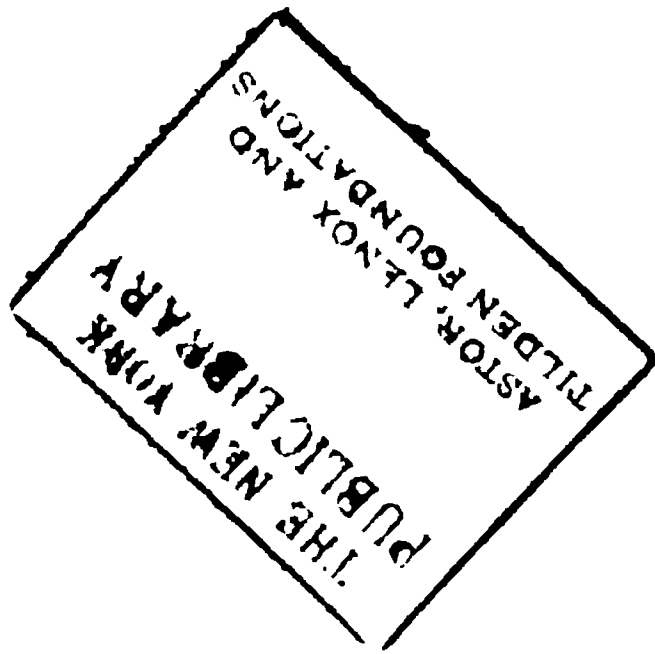
OTHO: 69 A. D. The atrocities attending the elevation of Otho to the imperial office formed a disastrous omen of things to come. Piso Licinianus, a man of noble character, who had been chosen and publicly proclaimed by Galba as his successor, was dragged from the temple of Vesta, where his person should have been sacred, and ruthlessly butchered by Otho's order. The favorite and justly detested Vinius was the next victim, following whose death came that of the few remaining friends of Galba; and "after a day of guilt and carnage," says the historian, "the joys that succeeded completed the climax of abominations." The fathers decreed to Otho the name of Augustus and all imperial honors which had been enjoyed by former Cæsars, and the murderer of Galba was conveyed triumphantly through the bloody Forum, past heaps of headless Roman citizens, to the imperial palace, where, as he flattered himself, he was now to be the master of revels in which thus far he had merely assisted.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

His joy was short-lived. During the very first night of his imperial grandeur he was tortured by horrible dreams, in which the ghost of the murdered Galba threatened him with a drawn sword; and the Emperor, in a frenzy of fear, ro ed out of bed shrieking for his guards. Almost immediately also came the mutiny of the German legions, who took an oath to Vitellius, as Emperor, and advanced upon Italy. Otho first endeavored to conciliate Vitellius by offering him a share in the Empire. But the commander of the Rhine legions refused to divide the gift of his soldiers. Otho, in the meantime, by again setting up the statues of Nero, by restoring his friends to place and office and promising the speedy completion of the Golden House, and above all by announcing his intention to obey the laws and govern equitably, had acquired a very considerable support in Rome. Upon the failure of his negotiations with Vitellius, he prepared vigorously for war, and, after assembling the neighboring legions and the prætorian cohorts, marched to intercept the Germans. The first passage was favorable to the Emperor, but at a great battle near Cremona, where forty thousand were slain, the troops of Vitellius were successful. Although the Emperor's resources were still far from contemptible,—it would have been mere child's play for the first Cæsar to have turned the defeat into a glorious victory,—he preferred to accept the verdict as final. He gave a great dinner to his officers and friends, to whom he finally addressed a farewell speech, declaring that he was unwilling to cause further bloodshed. When the feast ended, he retired to his room, wrote a letter of consolation to the widow of Nero, whom he had intended to marry,¹ committing his ashes to her care, and then slept calmly until daybreak, when he drew

¹ Messalina, Nero's third wife. *Ante*, page 156.

GALBA



COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

a dagger from under his pillow and stabbed himself to death. He had reigned barely three months and had just completed his thirty-seventh year. The reckless and vicious associate and abetter in Nero's abominable depravity, it has been well said that in all his life nothing became Otho so well as his manner of leaving it. His funeral was celebrated at Brixellum, where he died, and in commendation of his fortitude many of his soldiers killed themselves at his pyre. One can but wonder which was the most distorted, the character of the suicides or their conception of the character of the Emperor slain by his own hand.

VITELLIUS: 69 A. D. Early in the reign of Galba, Fortenis Capito, who had assumed imperial rights in Lower Germany, of which he was governor, had been slain by Valens, legate of one of the legions—not improbably to remove a witness of the murderer's own abortive intrigues. Galba sent to Germany as general in place of Capito, Aulus Vitellius, a man without military or indeed any special distinction, except that of having been what Suetonius terms "scandalously vicious." Vitellius is considered to have been of mean birth, although his grandfather was a Roman knight and procurator under the first Cæsar, and his father was a censor and under the Emperor Claudius second in rank in the Empire. After attaining the purple, when it became necessary to proclaim a more extended genealogy, no difficulty was found in tracing his descent from an early King of Latium and Vitellia, a Sabine divinity. As the companion and favorite of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, Vitellius had become an adept in all the vices and depravity of the age. While superintendent of the public works he practised the most shameless robbery, and after squandering everything that he could steal, is said to

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COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

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THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

“Hidden in the shady groves of the gardens of Aricia, like those slothful brutes which if you give them food lie down and sleep,” it was not until Rome itself became involved that Vitellius awoke from his torpor. As a modern writer has observed, “he had regarded the Empire as a banquet, and desired to finish the feast in tranquillity.”¹ The fair city of Cremona had been utterly annihilated by the advancing Flavians; Rome was threatened with a similar fate, and the imperial hog, after watching for a time from his table in the palace of Tiberius the sanguinary attack upon the Capitol,² finally escaped in a litter, accompanied by his cook and baker, to a house on the Aventine occupied by his wife. He was finally taken by the prætorians, and amidst outrageous insults, half naked, a rope about his neck and his hands tied behind his back, was dragged down the Via Sacra and across the Forum, where his predecessor had been slain, a sword being thrust beneath his chin to compel him to look up at his tormentors; to be at last hacked to pieces on the Gemonian stairs, from whence his remains were thrown into the Tiber.

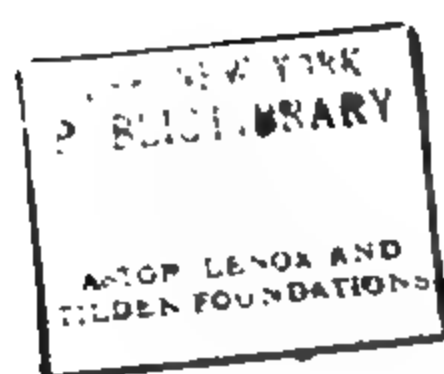
VESPASIAN: 69 A. D. With the Emperor Vespasian it may be said the Augustan age recommenced, continuing for rather more than a century, when the death of Marcus Aurelius marked the culmination of imperial splendor.

Vitellius was the last of the patrician Emperors. His successor was the son of a Sabine peasant, whose father had been a centurion in Pompey's legions at Pharsalia. The Emperor's father, after serving in the army, was made

¹ Duruy, *Hist. Rome*.

² The Capitoline and Palatine, at the northwest elevation of which latter stood the imperial palace, are separated only by the depression which constituted the Roman Forum.

OTHO



COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

collector of taxes in Asia; and he displayed such notable honesty in office that statues were raised to him bearing the inscription "To the honest collector of taxes." At a time when those of his contemporaries who had greatness thrust upon them were tracing their descent from the divinities, it is refreshing to read that Vespasian repudiated the lofty pedigree prepared for him by his flatterers and showed a manifest pride in his humble but honest ancestry.

Titus Flavius Vespasianus was born in the country of the Sabines in the year 10 A. D.—five years before the death of the Emperor Augustus. He had therefore seen the rise and fall of seven Emperors before his own hopes of obtaining the purple were realized. He was sixty years old when he came to power, and during the remaining ten years of a life that had been one of ceaseless activity, he labored earnestly, intelligently, and successfully for the welfare of the State. Historians have spoken of him as a time-serving flatterer of Caligula, and Suetonius heaps upon him the reproach of a sordid and culpable avarice. His cowardly flatteries of the third Emperor can be neither denied nor condoned; but the other charge of Suetonius has been seriously questioned. However this may be, by a long life of faithful and brilliant services to the State, from the time of Claudius to his death thirty years later, Vespasian redeemed his early reputation, and if by only setting a good example, accomplished more for the Roman State than ever could have been gained by reformatory laws alone. Under his awakening touch and firm guidance the innate vitality of the mighty creation of Augustus and his great predecessor soon put an end to the rapid disorganization which had set in—a disorganization inevitable under a constitution where everything depended upon the master, and where the latter was a Caligula or a Nero.

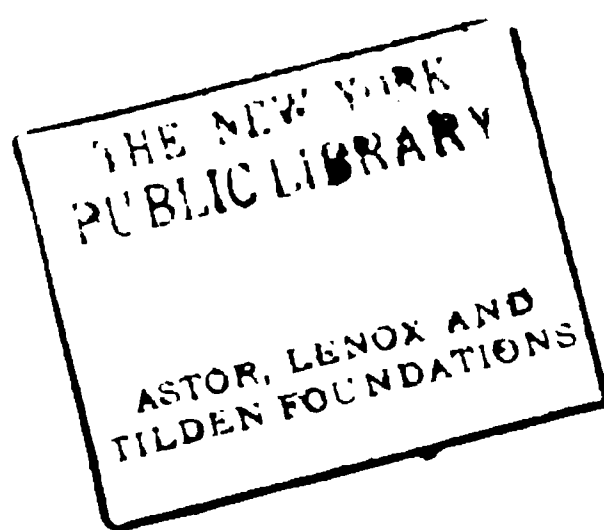
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

The Emperor profited by the very excesses of those who had brought the State to such an evil pass; and it is without doubt largely from contrast with these others, that the early century writers declared Vespasian worthy to be compared with the best princes who ever reigned. From what can be learned of his work and methods, he seems to have apprehended the fundamental principle of all true reform,—the supplanting of the old idea with a new and better one. Suetonius himself is compelled to render him this high testimony,—that it would be difficult to name a single person unjustly punished in his reign, unless it were done in his absence or without his knowledge. St. Augustine says of him that he was a good prince and very worthy of being beloved, while the historian Pliny declares, "Greatness and majesty produced in him no other effect than to render his power of doing good equal to his desire."

It was fitting that for this man, who had proved himself truly the Emperor required by the times, the recurrence of that grim imperial disease which had stricken every Cæsar since Augustus should be stayed. In the little house in Reate where his childhood had been passed, and which he had sacredly preserved unchanged, death came to him, in his seventieth year. Up to the last moment he calmly and courageously occupied himself with the affairs of the State. When the final moment approached he jokingly remarked,—referring to his coming apotheosis,—“I shall soon be a god!” A little later he cried out, “An Emperor ought to die standing,” and, attempting to rise, expired in the effort. He had reigned ten years.

TITUS: 79 A. D. The elder Vespasian had married in early life Flavia Domitilla, who had formerly been the

VITELLIUS



COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

mistress of Statilius Capella, a Roman knight of Sobrata in Africa. This wife and their only daughter died before he became Emperor, and Vespasian had thereupon renewed his former relations with Cænis, a freedwoman of Antonia; which may account for the fact that his two sons, Titus and Domitian, were educated in the palace with the young Britannicus. The elder boy is alleged to have been remarkable for his bodily and mental endowments. Certain it is that he soon showed himself to be a man of action and served the State with distinction under Nero and his three immediate successors. Early in the reign of his father, Titus had achieved great glory by the final overthrow of Jerusalem, which succumbed after a two years' siege; and following the triumph which in commemoration of this affair was celebrated jointly by father and son,¹ the latter was openly associated with Vespasian in the conduct of the Empire. It was a wise act on the part of the old Emperor, upon whose death not a voice was raised against the transmission of the purple to Titus, who thus enjoyed the unique distinction of being the first prince who succeeded to the Empire by hereditary right.

Such an accession must have been a surprise to the Roman world, accustomed to the wildest upheaval upon the death of a Cæsar—especially in view of the fact that the new Emperor's brother had made no secret of his expectation to be a partner in the Empire. But it was a strong hand which now held the reins, and fortified by rather more than common shrewdness, and the experience born of his long participation in power, Titus also displayed a moral character which could hardly have been expected in view of his somewhat wild and dissolute youth. Strange

¹ This triumph was marked by the beautiful "Arch of Titus" which spans the road from the Forum to the Colosseum.



COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

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COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

him." Titus had indeed always treated his brother with unmerited respect, and had invariably declared Domitian to be his successor; which was perhaps one reason why Rome accepted its new master apparently as matter of course. But it is only upon the theory that the new Emperor had arranged the matter in advance with the ever corruptible prætorians that we can satisfactorily account for the failure of the Senate and people to repudiate the degenerate Flavian.

The comfort and assistance which Vespasian derived from his elder son were largely counterbalanced by the cares and mortification imposed upon him by the younger. The Emperor did not fail to realize the wide difference between the two young men. Once at table, when Domitian declined to partake of mushrooms,¹ the father dryly remarked that he "would better fear the dagger." The son grew up to be cruel, lazy, vindictive, sensual, and superstitious; and the effect of this combination of vices in the sovereign head of a semi-barbaric despotism may readily be imagined. Upon first succeeding to power, Domitian made professions of justice and clemency—even of morality. But his evil instincts could not long be repressed, and during nearly fifteen years his treatment of the Roman people was exactly what might have been expected from a ruler whose favorite occupation in private was that of transfixing flies with a pin. His uninterrupted career of selfish wickedness was redeemed only by an occasional public-spirited act, such as the erection of buildings and other monuments, and the enactment of some moderately good laws—the latter intended, of course, for every one except the Emperor and his favorites.

¹ The mushroom seems to have been a favorite medium for the administration of poison. Claudius was disposed of in this way.

THE REIGN OF CESAR

...even compelling
...which was so abhor-
...the shame and dis-
...of the Emperor's
...it may also have brought him
...of a strong and martial hand
...which had so easily coun-
...efforts in favor of reform.
...of a successor he selected the
...the purpose of restoring disci-
...the State a ruler whom no force would
...was then waging war upon the
...of a great victory came from Pan-
...after making solemn offerings in the Capi-
...accepted Trajan as his son, at the same time
...the surname of Germanicus, which the
...himself assumed in honor of his general's
...bidding Trajan, in a letter, avenge the in-
...the Emperor had sustained from the leading
...guard. Nerva passed quietly away after
...months.

98 A. D. In the selection of Trajan as his suc-
...Nerva supplied the State with its first provincial
...M. Ulpius Trajanus was born at Italica on
...a colony in Spain which had been founded
...Africanus during the Second Punic War. His
...was a soldier who had attained the highest civil
...military honors—consul, governor, *triumphalia orna-*
...pro-consul in Asia. Under his father the future
...made his first military campaigns, and himself
...became noted as a brave and skilful general,
...achieving the prætorship and consulship, with the

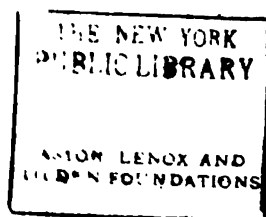
TITUS

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

of his uncle's death was received. His procedure, says a modern writer, was very simple: to the soldiers he promised a double *donativum*, to the senators he addressed an exceedingly modest letter. "The former were no more capable of resisting the money than the latter were the fair words, backed by seven legions; each received his share and felt satisfied!" But the old murderous spirit which had dominated the Roman world under the Julian dynasty must needs bubble up with the death of Trajan, who had inspired a respect and fear which the comparatively unknown Hadrian could not at first command. A plot was formed to kill the Emperor, and as the ring-leaders were men of consequence,—all four of them ex-consuls,—it would undoubtedly have borne fruit but for a chance discovery during the absence of Hadrian, whose first information in regard to the matter was that the Senate had promptly executed the conspirators. Upon his accession to power Hadrian immediately gave up the profession of arms and devoted himself entirely to administrative work. Emulating the simple and praiseworthy manner of living which had endeared his great predecessor to the Roman world, and ruling for the most part justly and well, he speedily gained the confidence and esteem of both Senate and people and is fairly entitled to be called a great monarch. One writer terms him "the best in the imperial series"; while another declares that "when the glory of rulers is measured by the happiness which they have given to their subjects, Hadrian will stand forth the first of the Roman Emperors."

In his domestic relations the Emperor was unfortunate. There seems to have been no sympathy between husband and wife. The Emperor knew no peace until Sabina was perhaps the reason for a report that

DOMITIAN AND LONGINA



COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

her death was caused by ill treatment. Having no children, Hadrian chose for companion a beautiful boy named Antinous. But a crazy seer having declared that the Emperor's life would be prolonged if some one would die for him, Antinous committed suicide. Shortly after this loss, realizing that he was growing old, the Emperor secured the consent of the Senate to his adoption of a successor, and his choice fell upon Lucius Commodus Verus, who, strangely enough, was son-in-law to Caius Nigrinus, who was one of those put to death by the Senate for conspiring against the Emperor. Verus seems to have been chosen on account of his pleasing personality, for although apparently gifted with eloquence and talents, he was without fixed character and led the elegant life of the rich patricians. The assent of the people and of the soldiers was secured by a large gift of money; but the choice of Verus never was popular and brought no comfort to the old Emperor. Fortunately for his reputation, Verus did not long outlive his honor, and once more Hadrian found himself alone in the world. These family sorrows now began to affect both his health and to some extent his character. During the later years of his reign there seem to have been numerous executions for alleged conspiracy, although it is by no means certain that for these the Emperor was directly responsible. And certain it is that he retained enough character and wisdom to make another public adoption which gave to Rome two of her best and wisest rulers. Assembling the most important of the senators at the palace, he declared that he had chosen as his successor Aurelius Antoninus; and as the latter had no son living and was himself advanced in years, Hadrian stretched his authority to include in the adoption, as successors to Antoninus, Lucius Aurelius Verus (son of that Verus who

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

had first been designated as Hadrian's successor) and Marcus Annius Verus, a youth whose great capacities had already impressed the Emperor and who afterwards became the celebrated Marcus Aurelius.

This adoption occurred the twenty-fifth of February, and on the tenth of March following Hadrian died. His last days were clouded with pain and suffering, so that towards the end he prayed for death and actually begged a freedman to strike him with a sword—having marked the place over his heart with a piece of chalk. The man's courage failed, however, and he ran away, leaving the wretched old Emperor to fight it out alone; which he finally did with some degree of calmness and even of melancholy wit, if we may accept as authentic some lines of poetry "to his fluttering soul" which he left behind.¹ He was sixty-two at the time of his death, and had reigned over twenty years. His ashes were entombed in the mighty mausoleum which bears his name—now, however, commonly spoken of as the Castle of St. Angelo.

TITUS ANTONINUS: 138 A. D. The new Emperor had been neither a relative nor an intimate friend of Hadrian, whose second choice of a successor seems to have been based alone upon the latter's manifest qualifications for the office, at least as far as character and virtues were concerned. Titus Aurelius Fulvus Boionius Arrius Antoninus, as he had been named before his adoption,² was

¹ The lines are as follows:

*"Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes, comesque, corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loca,—
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec, ut soles dabis jocos";*

which Dean Merivale has translated:

*"Soul of mine, pretty one, flitting one,
Guest and partner of my day,
Whither wilt thou hie away,
Pallid one, rigid one, naked one,—
Never to play again, never to play!"—*

² After his accession he was called Titus Aëtius Hadrianus Antonius Pius Augustus, commonly shortened to Antonius Pius, or "the Dutiful."

COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

born near Lanuvium on the nineteenth of September, 86. His ancestors came originally from Nîmes, upon which city the Emperor Tiberius had conferred the *jus Latii*, whereby any inhabitant who had held municipal office became clothed with Roman citizenship. Both there and at Rome the Antonines had enjoyed the highest civil offices, including at least five consulships. The family possessed an enviable record for character, and the virtues of the new Emperor had come to him by direct inheritance from both his father and grandfather, who were men of purest lives. He had himself filled the offices of consul, pro-consul (in Asia), *judex* of one of the Italian provinces, and member of the imperial consistory; all of which indicates plainly that before adoption he had enjoyed the imperial favor.

It is a mooted question whether or not the Emperor's domestic relations were happy. His wife, the beautiful Faustina, has been accorded an extremely bad reputation; but it is not improbable that the attacks upon her character were in the main slanderous. Certain it is that the Emperor professed for her both love and esteem, and refused to marry again after her death, which occurred shortly after his accession. Three of their four children had previously died; and of Faustina the younger, who became the wife of Marcus Aurelius, little that is not disparaging has come down to us.

Antoninus was fifty years of age when he came to the throne, and the twenty odd years of his reign were a time of peace, plenty, and protection for the Romans. Some wars, it is true, were necessarily waged in defence of his Empire; but personally he undertook no expedition and during nearly a quarter of a century he did not leave Rome or its environs, except for a rapid tour in Asia. It is a grave question whether the very mildness of his

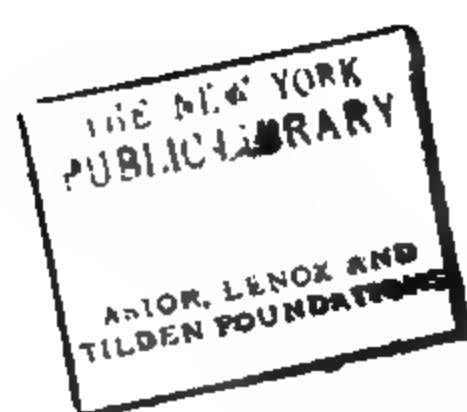
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

government was not the primal cause of his successor's greatest misfortunes. Unduly fond of his ease and inclined towards too much complacency with the Senate, the administration of Antoninus was lacking in the discipline and rigidity with which Trajan and Hadrian had made possible their successor's own peaceful reign. But for all, Rome—that is to say, mankind—owed him a genuine debt of gratitude, and posterity has accorded him so unique a place among the best rulers of his time that his name has become a veritable proverb for goodness.

In his seventy-fourth year, after a life theretofore singularly free from any sort of infirmity, his physical strength began to decrease, although without attendant bodily disorder; and in March, 161, after the barest shadow of an illness, he calmly passed away. His last words—in reply to the tribune of the guards, who inquired for the password—were “Patience and Resignation”; which may be accepted as an unaffected declaration of the principle which had guided him in every dark hour. He had reigned twenty-three years.

MARCUS AURELIUS: 161 A. D. The successor of Antoninus was of a family which came originally from Spain, although he himself was born at Rome, on April 26, 121. His ancestry was patrician, his grandfather having been twice consul, and prefect of the city. His mother, Lucilla, was a direct descendant from Domitius Afer, the favorite historian of the Emperor Tiberius. His name was Marcus Annius Verus; after his adoption he was called Ælius Aurelius Verus Cæsar, and after his succession Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus. From early boyhood his life had been austere, the philosopher's cloak having been assumed at the age of twelve, from which time he never failed to practise the severest stoical simplicity; sleeping

NERVA



COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

on the bare ground, eating little, exercising and working without intermission, and indulging in no pleasures—or rather invariably finding his pleasure in an unceasing devotion to duty, the pursuit of knowledge, and the attainment of a perfect self-mastery.

Although Antoninus had named Marcus Aurelius alone as his successor, the latter felt called upon to associate with himself in the imperial power Lucius Aurelius Verus, who, it will be remembered, had been adopted with Aurelius as one of the heirs-apparent of Antoninus at the time the latter was formally chosen to succeed Hadrian. Verus, however, although still further dignified by his marriage with Lucilla, the Emperor's daughter, seems to have had the good sense to content himself with the position of a lieutenant. This was fortunate both for the reputation of Aurelius and the welfare of the people; for nothing but the Emperor's own gravity of life could apparently have made amends for the wild and riotous conduct of the son-in-law, who would soon have destroyed the honor of the imperial house if he had openly occupied the position accorded by his too generous brother. Supported by a select coterie of wild spirits, Verus displayed all the personal misconduct with which Rome had been disgraced by Nero, with the important exception that his extravagance and debauchery were free from cruelty. Fortunately, however, the Emperor had an early opportunity and the good sense to despatch his associate to the East, where the fortunes of the Empire were seriously threatened by a Parthian invasion; and in his conduct of the campaign Verus certainly bore himself both modestly and with credit. He performed a distinct service to the State in discovering the conspiracy of Crassus, who was plotting to overthrow Aurelius and seize the Empire. Four years later, after the inglorious

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

campaign in Illyria, Verus died of apoplexy at Altinum and relieved Aurelius from further sorrow and shame. Unhappy in his adoptive brother, the Emperor was even more unfortunate in his direct family relations. His wife, Faustina (daughter of the preceding Emperor), must have been indeed an infamous woman, as the Senate begged the Emperor to punish or at least divorce her.¹ Seven children had been born to the imperial pair, of whom two boys died in infancy, the eldest daughter disgraced herself as the unfaithful wife of Pompeianus,² while Commodus, the only other son, at an early age disclosed the peculiarly evil instincts which in later years, and under the robust stimulus of arbitrary power, developed into a character more degraded even than that of Nero, if such a thing were possible.

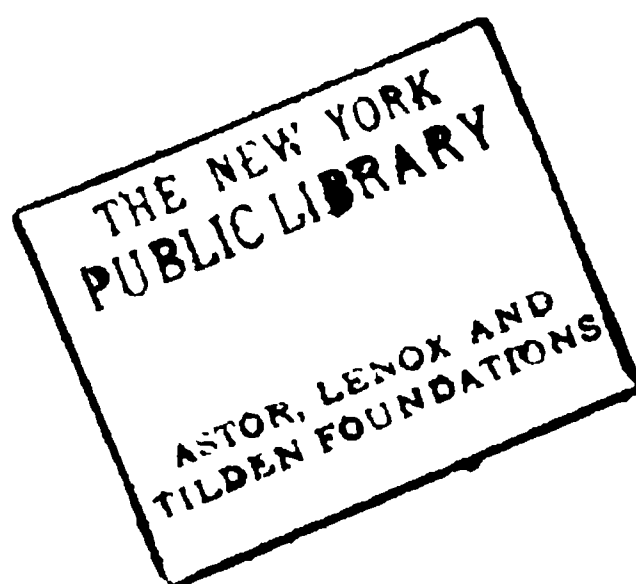
Aurelius certainly needed all of his stoicism to sustain the burdens and calamities which finally pressed upon him. The splendor and magnificence of the Empire had reached its apogee. Already the signs of decay and disintegration were manifest. The reign of the "Philosopher," begun in tranquillity, had gradually developed into a period of recurring storms. Inundations, pestilence, famine, war, grim persecution³—in its final effect more blasting even than war,—all of these calamities in turn bore

¹ Among the scandalous stories about Faustina were the reports that Commodus was really the son of a gladiator, and that Verus, who had married her daughter, Lucilla, was one of her lovers, Lucilla being herself charged with a similar offence in after years.

² Pompeianus was her second husband.

³ The persecutions of the Christians which occurred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius have left the one dark stain upon an otherwise sanguine. In refusing "to swear by the gods,"—that is, in refusing certain laws of the State,—the victims were deserving of punishment, according to the Emperor, who when appealed to declared that the law must take its course.

TRAJAN



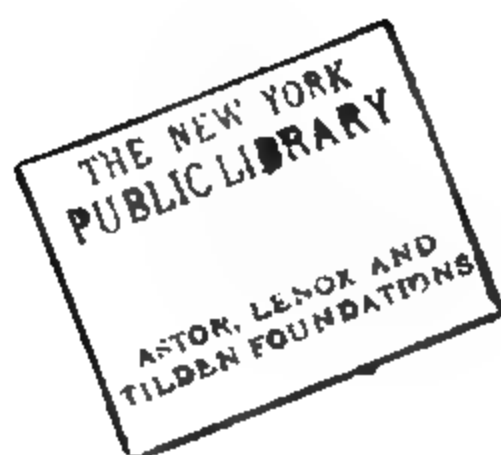
COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

down upon the just and gentle-minded Emperor, who, unsupported even by the love and consideration of a virtuous wife or son, became sad and mournful and rarely was seen to smile. It is impossible to withhold profoundest pity for the misfortunes which towards the end engulfed a man whose life from very boyhood had been so loyally cast upon lines of the highest ideals, essentially pagan though such ideals may be considered. But on the other hand, it is because of the very clearness of his perception and rigidity of his practice in moral affairs that we also find it difficult to avoid reproaching him for naming as his successor in an office where, as he must have known, the character of the occupant counted for so much, the weak, licentious, and savage youth whose innate wickedness had already become manifest. For it is to be remembered that the principle of royal heredity, although of course always dear to a father's heart, as it seems to be naturally acceptable to the governed, was by no means that which had theretofore obtained in the Empire. On the contrary, out of sixteen Emperors there had been only two, thus far who were the natural heirs of their predecessor.¹ For the rest, the custom of adoption (which, through the incident of formal ratification by the Senate and the army,² has been well pointed out³ to have been a sort of compromise between the principles of heredity and popular election) had controlled in the bestowal of the purple, the army or Senate stepping in where, for any reason, the privilege had not been exercised

¹ These were Titus and Domitian.

² Confirmation by the Senate was considered as the assent of the nobility; that of the soldiers was accepted as a ratification by the people, of whom the army was considered more representative than was the populace of the city.

³ Duruy.



COMPLETION OF SPLENDOR

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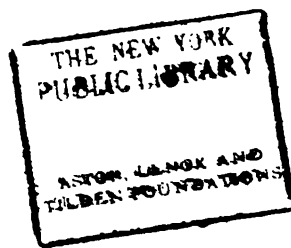
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

Commodus, who was with the army at the time of the Emperor's death, was urged by his father's generals to stay and press the advantages which had been obtained. Lured by the seductions of the capital, however, he bought an ignoble peace with the barbarians, and leaving Niger, Pertinax, Albinus, and Severus (each of whom afterwards became Emperor) to guard the frontiers, Commodus hurried to Rome and at once plunged into that sea of vice from which he never emerged. Of an inferior intellect, his low instincts prompted him to pleasures either vulgar or hideous; and being both vicious and timid, it needed only a spark to develop that unreasoning cruelty which is the inevitable outcome of such a nature when frightened or opposed. It was his sister Lucilla¹ who roused the tiger within him. Jealous of the Emperor's wife,² who of course had the precedence, Lucilla formed a plot to kill Commodus and bestow the purple upon her friend Quadratus, a rich young senator, through whom she would thus obtain a larger measure of power. To her son-in-law, who was an intimate friend of the Emperor, was intrusted the task of striking the blow; and one evening as Commodus was passing through a dark passage leading to the amphitheatre, the assassin fell upon him with a dagger, crying "The Senate sends thee this!" Fortunately for Commodus, his guards were at hand, the assassin was knocked down and killed, Cæsar escaping without a scratch, although so overcome with fright that he could scarcely speak. When he recovered his senses he was wild with fury; Lucilla, Quadratus, and all others concerned in the plot were put to death at once, and upon the strength of the words used by the

¹ The widow of his father's adoptive brother Verus. *Ante*, page 231.

² The Empress Crispina.

HADRIAN



DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

assassin many noble senators, friends of Aurelius, also perished. From that day the cruelty of Commodus knew no bounds. He seemed possessed with a veritable thirst for blood. The list of his victims is so long that we can well believe Dion's statement, that of all who enjoyed distinction in the State during the reign of his father three only under Commodus escaped with their lives. Once more the informers, who had flourished under Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, were called into being. Indiscriminate accusations of all sorts of crimes were lodged by these scoundrels against the wealthier nobles, condemnation following as matter of course; whereupon their estates were seized by the Emperor, who shared with the informers.¹

But not content with executions of this sort, in which he could not personally participate, this brutalized offspring of the virtuous Antonines actually descended into the arena, where, surrounded and protected by Moorish and Parthian archers, and thus absolutely without danger to himself, he fought over seven hundred combats and fairly glutted himself in blood. "Never," says Lampridius, "did he appear in public without being stained with blood. When he had mortally wounded a gladiator, he would plunge his hand into the wound and then wipe the blood off on his hair." And Dion tells with shocking particularity how he collected a number of maimed and infirm persons, had them disguised as fabulous monsters and then turned into the streets of Rome, where this Divine Augustus fell upon them with clubs and beat them to death, while the degraded populace hailed him as Amazonius Victor!

As long as Commodus scattered gold among them and maintained the amphitheatres with such extravagance, and as long as it was only the nobles who were terrorized, mur-

¹ Many noble women even suffered in the same way.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

dered, and robbed, the populace had nothing but applause for their flower-crowned darling. It was another thing when they themselves were oppressed, and when the exactions of the favorites, Perennis and Cleander, became too grinding they rose in wrath and did some murdering on their own account. While their frightened master seems to have taken the hint and left the populace alone after they had killed his two friends, his conduct towards the rest of the State was if anything worse than ever; and it soon became evident that expiation could not be much longer delayed. The Empress Crispina, having been banished to Capri under a charge of adultery, was finally put to death; after which Commodus formed a passionate attachment for a woman named Marcia, the widow of one of the Emperor's victims.¹ Marcia is said to have been a Christian;² and proof positive of the assertion may be found in the fact that she it was who finally relieved the Roman world of its greatest monster. On the eve of the Saturnalia,³ while Commodus was making ready to pass the night in a school of gladiators as final preparation for the bloody deeds of the day to come, a child playing about the palace discovered some tablets upon which the

¹ The name of concubine seems to have had no disgrace attached to it. A woman occasionally inscribed upon her husband's tomb *Concubina et haeres*. Vespasian, Antoninus, Aurelius, Constantius the Pale, and Constantine the Great, all had maintained concubinage. It was really a kind of marriage, not suppressed until the time of Leo VI, 928 A. D.

² The one good thing which may be attributed to Commodus—the freedom from persecution enjoyed by the Christians under his reign—is doubtless in no small degree attributable to the influence of Marcia. But it must be admitted that even before she came upon the scene, when the Emperor first came to the throne (his ferocious cruelty not having been yet aroused), he released from prison those Christians who had been incarcerated by his father.

³ The great festival of Saturn, celebrated December seventeenth.

DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

Emperor had written the names of the victims who should next perish. Among them were the chamberlain of the palace, the prefect of the guards, and Marcia herself. It was the last straw, and the hastily formed plan for self-preservation was instantly carried out. Calling for wine, according to his custom on leaving the bath, Commodus received the fatal cup from Marcia herself, and the effect not proving instantaneous, Lætus and the others—including the Emperor's own physician—promptly choked him to death. So perished at last this Roman abomination in the purple robe, in the thirty-second year of his age¹ and the thirteenth of his tyranny. Writers who have preserved the history of his reign have supplied us with a monotonous account of the most shocking atrocities, without the relation of one good measure of government or one single act which shows care for the public interest. And of the five monsters whose hideous crimes render the perpetrators unique in history—Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Caracalla, and himself—Commodus may fairly be accounted the worst, both for what he did and what he failed to do.

PERTINAX—DIDIUS JULIANUS: 193 A. D. Following the death of Commodus, six claimants for the imperial office sprang up in different parts of the Empire, and of the five who were actually proclaimed only one died a natural death.²

¹ Nero died at the same age; Caracalla was two and Caligula three years younger, while Domitian, the other member of this precious quintette, was forty-five. Caligula reigned four years, Nero fifteen, Domitian fifteen, Commodus eleven, Caracalla six.

² Septimius Severus. From the death of Marcus Aurelius to the time of the Emperor Diocletian, a period of about one hundred years, out of fifty-one Emperors, with the exception of Claudius II, who died of the plague, Septimius Severus is the only one who died from natural causes.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

The first to be invested was Pertinax, who was chosen by the guard upon the motion of its prefect, Lætus, who had participated in the murder of Commodus. The son of a charcoal dealer in Liguria, the new Emperor had risen in turn through all the important public offices in both the army and State, including command of the Danubian army and the administration of four consular provinces. At the time of his selection he was prefect of the city, and although now sixty-six years of age, the stern old general, who seems to have been noted alike for his honesty, simplicity, and severity in discipline, at first gave promise of accomplishing just what Rome needed, after the disorganizing reign of the besotted Commodus. But the matter had gone too far; the antidote had been too long delayed. Three days after his investiture the guards rose, and Pertinax was able to quiet them only by an immense *donativum*, which he secured by a forced sale of the luxurious belongings of his predecessor. Shortly after, it was discovered that Lætus was himself forming a plot against the Emperor, who, however, declined to approve the Senate's recommendation that Lætus should be put to death, Pertinax declaring that during his reign no Roman should be executed.

Such clemency was ill advised. The people were satisfied with their new Emperor, who ruled justly and well. But the army, accustomed to the license and extravagance of a Commodus, were ill pleased with the economy and unbending discipline which the upright old soldier imposed upon Rome. Again the guard rose¹—this time determined to overthrow the government. The friends of the Emperor

¹ It is alleged that Lætus was responsible for the uprising, he having put certain prætorians to death, throwing upon the Emperor the odium of the execution.

JULIA SABINA WIFE OF HADRIAN

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DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

urged him to fly, but the dauntless old man betook himself instead to the palace gates to meet the rioters, of whom there were three hundred. At sight of their imperial master, some indeed sheathed their swords; but a Tongrian soldier rushed in and wounded the Emperor, whereupon the whole band fell upon him and hacked him to pieces. He had reigned eighty-seven days.

At the first news of the insurrection, Pertinax had sent his father-in-law, Sulpicianus, to treat with the prætorians, into whose midst, while the envoy was still present, soon came the rebels bearing the gray head of their Emperor impaled upon a spear. "The King is dead! Long live the King!"—and Sulpicianus, affecting no useless regrets for his daughter's husband, immediately began bargaining with the guards for the blood-stained purple of his son-in-law. Realizing that this was their opportunity, the prætorians now added to Roman disgrace its crowning shame in a veritable sale at auction of the Empire. A senator named Didius Julianus, who had achieved some prominence in the State, inspired by his ambitious wife, entered the list against Sulpicianus. The latter was in the prætorian camp; Julianus mounted the wall, and the bidding proceeded. Soldiers ran back and forth saying to the one, "He offers four thousand drachmæ; how much will you give?" and to the other, "He will give twenty thousand sesterces; will you go higher?" Julianus finally captured the prize by offering to give each soldier the equivalent of \$1150, at the same time promising to rehabilitate the memory of Commodus. The soldiers brought a ladder; Julianus descended from the wall, and, having received the oath and the imperial insignia from the guards, was conducted by the latter to the palace, where, after sneering at the simplicity of the repast which had been prepared

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for Pertinax, he ordered another and then went calmly to casting dice within sight of the spot where lay the uncared-for body of the dead Emperor.

When the news of all that was going on at Rome came to the armies, there was an outburst of rage against the Senate. Three famous generals were in the field,—Clodius Albinus, who commanded in Britain, Pescennius Niger in Syria, and Septimius Severus in Upper Pannonia.¹ The latter was by far the more vigorous in action, and within a short time, having skilfully secured the neutrality of Albinus and made himself practically master of half the military strength of the Empire, he marched rapidly on Rome. The wretched Julianus declared Severus a public enemy and made some feeble show of resistance. In the vain hope of ensuring the support of the prætorians, he put to death Lætus, Marcia, and the other murderers of Commodus; he despatched assassins to do away with Severus, and sent other emissaries to detach and embroil his troops. But his adversary was utterly resistless. Proclaimed at Vienna on April 18, he was at the gates of Rome with an immense army in less than seven weeks. Although the way was open to him, Severus shrewdly avoided the spilling of blood, by sending a message to the guard that he sought only the murderers of Pertinax. Immediate compliance on the part of the prætorians was followed by a meeting of the Senate, which decreed the death of Julianus, divine honor to Pertinax, and imperial power to Severus. The miserable shadow of an Emperor was found cowering in his bed and died saying “What wrong have I committed?”—a question that might have been answered by the famous remark of Châteaubriand, that
tion without ability is a crime. Julianus was sixty
Danubian provinces.

PIUS ANTONINUS

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years old at the time of his death and had posed as Emperor sixty-six days.

PESCENNIUS NIGER—CLODIUS ALBINUS: 193-197 A. D.
Although from the death of Julianus, Severus is to be considered as the actual Emperor, it was necessary to dispose of the rival pretensions of Niger and Albinus, each of whom had been proclaimed by his respective legions, before Septimius might deem himself the undisputed master of the Roman world. Of the three competitors who started with him in the race, one had been quickly overthrown, and with characteristic determination and energy Severus set himself to the remainder of his task; which in the end he accomplished so well as to provoke the historian Herodian to say: "That one man should have been able to overthrow three competitors already in possession of power; that he should have destroyed one of these in his palace in Rome, the second in the remote East, the third in the remote West, ~~is~~ this is a success almost unparalleled in history." All of which indeed stamps the Emperor as a man of action and power, but at the same time plainly indicates the ~~inexorable~~ sternness which was to characterize his reign.

Pescennius Niger (the Black) was a soldier of fortune. The son of a *curator* at Aquinum, he began his career as a centurion and worked his way up through all the military grades. The death of Pertinax found Niger in command of nine legions and numerous auxiliaries in Syria, and Roman Asia at once proclaimed him Emperor. Niger seems to have been a man of stern virtues, affable in his manners and extremely popular with his army, albeit a rigid disciplinarian. He had been highly esteemed by Marcus Aurelius; while Severus not only considered him a

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

ormidable adversary, but during an illness in the art of the war actually contemplated making Niger cessor.

two Emperors had been proclaimed about the same n April. On the second of June, Rome was in pos- of Severus. He, however, tarried in the Imperial arely long enough to remove somewhat of the sena- listrust and to gain over the populace by gifts and gs; and Julianus had been dead only thirty days his conqueror again set out upon an "imperial hunt." ig the Hellespont, the troops of Severus engaged ces of his adversary at Cyzicus, Nicæa,¹ and Issus, hree actions the Asiatic legions being defeated, with laughter at the last. Niger fled to Antioch, hoping an asylum among the Parthians, but was overtaken headed.² Three years later, after the final overthrow inus, Niger's wife, children, and six of his near rela- ere also put to death by the conqueror.

lbinus had followed Severus to Rome, in the spring ; the subsequent history of the Empire would ess have taken a widely different turn. From the the Senate cherished a strong distrust of Severus, ter the death of Niger all the hopes of the opposi- ere centred in Albinus. So that if the latter had t the seat of power while Septimius was warring liger in the East, the redoubtable Severus at least not have had things so much his own way. But the or was not only forceful and energetic—he pos- no small degree of shrewdness. And before start- pursuit of Niger he had sent messages to Albinus, undred years before Alexander made himself master of Asia r his victory over the Greeks at Nicæa.

1.

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declaring that he had adopted Clodius as his son, had granted him the title of Cæsar, and had designated him to share with himself the consulship of the next year. Whether deceived by the fair promises of Severus, or indifferent to the charms of imperial power, or merely waiting the time when he should have won over sufficient military support, certain it is that for nearly three years Albinus stopped quietly in the West, turning a deaf ear to the entreaties of those who were urging him to set up his standard.¹ It was not until the summer of 196 that an open rupture occurred, and it is uncertain whether it was precipitated by Albinus or Severus himself. The latter was returning to Rome through the valley of the Danube when he learned that Albinus had assumed the title of Augustus and was preparing to march into Gaul. Severus acted with usual promptitude. Albinus was declared both by the army and the Senate a public enemy, the Emperor's son Caracalla similarly proclaimed Cæsar, and Severus, putting himself at the head of his entire forces, threw himself into Gaul prepared for the supreme effort of his life.

If we may believe the historian of the time, three hundred thousand men were soon confronting each other on the banks of the Saône, between Lyons and Trévoux—prepared to tear each other in pieces over the question which of two brave men should be called the ruler of the world. Both Albinus and Severus commanded in person, for each knew that all of his fortune was at stake and it was conquer or perish. The armies seem to have been equally matched, the battle was bloody, and the issue long in doubt. A cavalry charge by Lætus decided the victory in favor of Severus, and Albinus, after an unsuccessful

Dion Cassius, who was himself a member of the Senate.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

attempt at suicide, fell into the hands of the victorious Romans, who carried him, still living, into the presence of the Emperor, by whose orders he was at once beheaded.¹

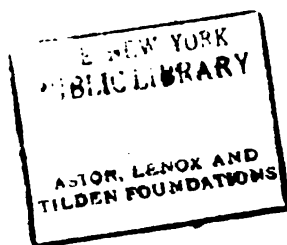
Little is to be found in regard to the family and early life of Albinus. He is, however, known to have been of pure African descent and his birth is said to have been illustrious. He seems to have had command in Germany as well as in Britain, and must have been a man of stamp to have rallied so large and determined a force in support of his claims. His wife and two sons were put to death by the Emperor's orders, but the entire family could not have been involved in his ruin, as one C. Albinus was prefect of Rome under Valerian.

SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS: 193–211 A. D. Like the last of his competitors, Severus was of African descent, having been born at Leptis² of a family which had refused to abandon its native province, even under the flattery of high civic honors bestowed by the Roman State. Severus himself, although liberally educated in Greek and Latin literature, never forgot his native tongue; and one of his earliest public acts was the erection of a statue of Hannibal, whose language he spoke and of whom he was vastly proud.

When about fourteen years old he was taken to Rome and there completed his education, which included a course of law under the eminent jurisconsult Scævola, the celebrated Papinian being one of his fellow-students and thereafter a lifelong friend. At the age of twenty-seven he entered the Senate, and in time passed through all the civil grades. From this branch of the public service he turned to the army; upon the death of Aurelius we find

¹ February 19, 187. ² April 11, 146.

FAUSTINA WIFE OF PIUS ANTONINUS



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him one of the chief commanders against the barbarians, in 182 he had the Scythian legion in Syria, and in the following year he was at the head of the Danubian army, by which he was proclaimed upon the death of Pertinax.¹

The foundation lines of his character were severity, a love of order, and unbounded energy; and Fortune being kind to him—as she always is to men who have the determination and ability to work out their own high aims—Severus was able to at least stay for a few years that degeneration of the Empire which, set in motion by Commodus, was to be so accelerated by the Emperor's own son.

The severity with which the name of Septimius has been associated by posterity was justified by the Emperor in his autobiography, upon the ground that it is better to crush by a few heavy blows than to strike feebly and often. In view of the times and the manners of the Roman world of his day, and judging by events; the Emperor's principle, at least from his own point of view, was not unsound. Thus when he made his first entry into Rome, the three hundred murderers of Pertinax were executed to a man; while the rest of the guard, invited to come out unarmed and take the oath of allegiance, suddenly found themselves surrounded by the Illyrian legions, and forthwith received from Severus the sentence of banishment, under penalty of death if found within the hundredth milestone of Rome after a certain number of days. Jeered at by both the soldiers and the populace, many of the prætorians, overcome by shame, committed suicide on the spot and the rest slunk away into obscurity. It was indeed a heavy blow. But there was no more impoverishment of the treasury to keep the guard quiet; besides which the

¹ *Ante*, page 241.

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or was now free to pursue the campaigns against Albinus without fear of a prætorian conspiracy on his back.¹ So after the overthrow of Albinus, when nineteen senators, convicted of a conspiracy in his favor, summarily put to death,² and at the same time every one who had sided against the Emperor paid for the same with life or fortune,—Severus justified this wholesale destruction of a faction in the laconic remark, “A man must be cruel once, that he may afterwards be merciful the rest of his life.”

Septimius made some good laws, erected some noble buildings,³ and fought many hard battles in defence of the empire. With the learned and upright Papinian as his counsellor, his legislation went hand in hand with his admirable administrative work which he himself in person directed. His highest gift to the State was the re-establishment of public order, which had flown to the winds under Commodus. The chief reproach upon his reign is the cruel persecution of the Christians, which, begun even by the bloody tyrant who preceded him, was renewed with increased severity by Septimius.

During his first campaign in Syria, Severus became ac-

quainted with the prætorian guard. Two years, however, the guard was reorganized, and in the end was much worse and more dangerous than ever, the Emperor having increased the number to forty thousand. As originally constituted by Augustus there were three cohorts of one thousand men each, but from Vespasian's time there were ten cohorts. The number of the prætorians was much reduced by the Emperor Diocletian, and under Constantine they passed out of history.

Among them was Sulpicianus, who had tried to buy the imperial robes and had just been stained with the blood of his son-in-law. *Ante,* l.

Among them the peculiar Septizonium, the ruins of which are yet to be seen at the southeast corner of the Palatine, and the magnificent triumphal arch which still dominates the Forum Romanum.

DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

quainted with the beautiful young daughter of Julius Bassianus, a priest of the Sun at Emesa¹; and learning that it had been foretold that she would become an empress, the superstitious African married her forthwith. Julia Domna² proved herself a helpmate in the highest sense. Beautiful, virtuous,³ intellectual, prudent, and yet ambitious withal, we can well believe that the Emperor both respected and leaned upon his wife, who accompanied him upon his expeditions⁴ and indeed is said to have first prompted him to assume the purple. Supported by her sister and two nieces,⁵ also famous for their beauty and mental gifts, the Empress gathered about her a circle of learned men, and so impressed herself upon the society of the times that her intellectual tastes are said to have lingered upon the Palatine long after "Julia the Philosopher" had followed her husband to the grave. She was the mother of four children: two daughters, of whom there is no trace in history,

¹ The name of this deity was Elagabalus. See *post*, page 259.

² It is a question whether "Domna" is a Roman appellation meaning mistress, or whether the word was merely a Syrian proper name.

³ She was indeed reproached by the scandal-mongers of her day with many immoralities. But in view of what is actually known about her life, the charge seems incredible. Certainly if the beautiful bust that we see in the rotunda of the Vatican (No. 554 of the Catalogue) is indeed that of "Julia Pia Domna," one need not be a physiognomist of any of the schools from Aristotle to Lavater to insist upon something more than insinuation before conceding immoralities to this pure, intellectual, and noble-looking woman.

⁴ From this fact she received the title "Mother of Camps," which appellation, with a figure of the Empress standing in front of three military standards, was actually impressed upon some of the coins of the reign.

⁵ These latter were Julia Soëmias and Julia Mamaea, each of whom afterwards became the mother of an Emperor, and their mother was the celebrated Julia Mæsa, who played an important part in the history of a subsequent reign. See *post*, page 258.

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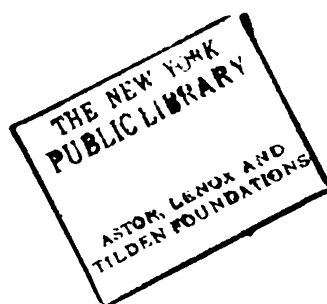
and two sons, one the wild but unfortunate Geta, the other named Bassianus, afterwards inscribed upon the roll of infamy as Caracalla.¹

In the year 208 Severus, although in his sixty-third year, wearying of the inactive life at Rome, set out upon what proved to be a last and disastrous campaign. Accompanied by the Empress and their sons, he proceeded to Britain, where for three years he pursued a fitful and ineffectual campaign against the northern barbarians, under their legendary heroes Fingal and Ossian. The loss of fifty thousand of his best troops compelled the Emperor to make a rather humiliating treaty with the unconquerable wild men of the north; and after partly rebuilding the great wall by which Hadrian had endeavored to keep the barbarians out, Severus, broken in health and spirit, retired to York to die. It is said that Caracalla, having been detected in a plot to dethrone his father and forgiven by the latter, afterwards attempted to assassinate the Emperor while on the march. But the story, although not at all improbable, rests upon insufficient evidence; and as Duruy says, "To these doubtful legends we shall prefer the truly imperial words of the old Emperor—'It is to me a great satisfaction to leave in profound peace the Empire which I found a prey to dissensions of every kind.'" He died with the characteristic words—(an order to the guard who came for the countersign)—"Go and see if anything is to be done." He was sixty-five years old and had reigned eighteen years.

GETA—CARACALLA: 211-217 A. D. After the example set by the lofty-minded Aurelius in the choice of his successor, that a man of the type of Severus should also have

¹ See Note 2 to *Caracalla*, page 251.

MARCUS AURELIUS



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yielded to the natural sentiment of heredity, even in favor of Caracalla, excites no surprise. On the eve of the final campaign against Albinus, the Emperor having himself previously taken the designation of "the son of Marcus Aurelius,"¹ the army was induced to proclaim Bassianus Cæsar under the name of Aurelius Antoninus.² The act was immediately confirmed by the Senate, and one year later, when Caracalla was only eleven years old, his father clothed him with the tribunitian power, equivalent to association in the Empire, at the same time proclaiming his younger son Geta as Cæsar.

It was thus plainly their father's intention that the brothers should share the Empire, and all of the Emperor's dispositions were made accordingly. But he seems to have assumed that Caracalla would be the dominant spirit, and with a view of securing an experienced mentor for his son, against the latter's wishes he had been compelled to marry Plautilla, daughter of the prefect Plautianus, an overbearing and unscrupulous official, in whom the Emperor, however, reposed implicit confidence. Caracalla was only about fifteen years of age at the time of this marriage, which so enraged him that he not only refused to live with the young Augusta, but shortly after

¹ The act was preceded by a veritable adoption, with full legal forms, the main object of Severus being to secure that portion of the immense wealth of Commodus which had not passed to the latter's sisters. In this way becoming the brother of Commodus, Severus was in a measure forced to rehabilitate the other's accursed memory; which perhaps more than anything else occasioned the conspiracy in favor of Albinus.

² Bassianus has invariably been known in history as Caracalla, which was the name of a Gallic garment, a sort of tunic with a hood, which he distributed among his soldiers and the common people of Rome. The surname of Caracalla, however, like that of Caligula and Elagabalus, was never officially recognized, merely having passed into history from the mouths of the people.

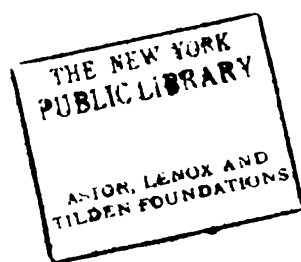
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

the marriage himself actually killed her father in the palace and very presence of the Emperor. He had influence enough with his father to procure the banishment of the son and daughter of Plautianus to Lipari; where a few years later Caracalla did not fail to perform his "marriage vow" to Plautilla, that he would kill her when he became Emperor—her brother perishing at the same time.

Geta was twenty-two years of age at the time of his father's death, while Caracalla had not yet completed his twenty-third year. The two brothers had long been at swords' points, even in the sports of their younger days hating each other with bitter rivalry, which at one time during a chariot race resulted in a broken thigh for the elder. Shunning the refined surroundings and influences of their mother, the wild and fiery young princes rushed into every sort of pleasure, associating with the lowest and roughest elements of the city. The Emperor, upon his death-bed, had exhorted his sons to union; although it is difficult to believe that he did not foresee the inevitable tragedy from conferring equal rights upon two hot-headed boys, of whom one at least had already disclosed a base and wicked nature.

After their father's death the brothers set out together for Rome, their jealousy and suspicion of each other becoming stronger as the journey progressed. Immediately upon their arrival, the soldiers were apportioned between them and stationed respectively on either side of the dividing line across the Palatine, which had been agreed upon by the two Emperors and was picketed by their respective guards. It was obvious that the explosion would not long be delayed. The Empress Julia is said to have inquired of her sons, "And will you also divide me?" to

FAUSTINA WIFE OF MARCUS AURELIUS



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avoid the embarrassment of which situation and of its recurrence, Caracalla speedily made his plans. Like his renowned father, he believed in one strong blow. He begged his mother to bring about a reconciliation, and Geta having in this way been enticed into the apartments of the Empress, Caracalla stabbed him, actually in his mother's arms, where he had taken refuge, her gray hair and widow's weeds being dabbled with the blood of a son slain by his brother. Caracalla at once ran to the guard and declared that he had barely escaped assassination at the hands of Geta; whereupon the latter was pronounced a public enemy, his statues were overthrown, his name was erased from the public monuments,¹ and the sword with which he had been slain was "consecrated" by the murderer, in the Temple of Serapis.

On the day following the murder, hell—that is to say the guard²—was let loose, and from that moment a reign of blood began. Twenty thousand partisans of Geta were murdered in the palace alone. The list of senatorial victims was also long, and at this time the noble Papinian and his son, the son of the Emperor Pertinax, an own cousin of Caracalla, and a daughter and grandson of Marcus Aurelius met the same fate.

Having made this clean sweep of his enemies, open and suspected, Caracalla embarked upon a career of vice, outrage, and savage wickedness which for sheer brutality had never been surpassed at Rome. Shameless orgies at the palace, massacres in the amphitheatres, open murders in the streets, a loose rein given to every form of vice,—once again the devoted city found itself under the heel of

¹ Geta's name is said to be partly legible upon the Arch of Severus in the Forum.

² The prætorians had been reëstablished. See note, *ante*, page 248.

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a frantic madman;¹ and this time there was no Marcia either to stay the hand of persecution or rid the world of its tyrant. Acting upon a maxim attributed to his father,—“Make the soldiers content and laugh at the rest,”—he practically turned the Empire over to the army, which was enough to counteract what little virtue and virility may have dared to show itself in the State.

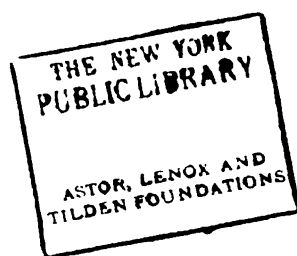
After making a shambles of the Imperial City, in the autumn of 215, it having come to his ears that his Egyptian subjects had spoken ill of him because of Geta's murder, he set out for Alexandria in pursuit of vengeance. Inviting the principal citizens to a banquet, at the end of the feast he commanded that every guest should be put to death. After personally seeing that not a man escaped, he ordered out all the troops, and stationing himself in the Temple of Serapis, he directed a massacre which in extent and cold-blooded barbarity has perhaps never been equalled. For days the carnage continued—without distinction of sex, age, or condition—the slaughter ceasing actually not until the strength of the butchers failed. And at Rome, when the news was received, a complacent Senate commemorated the event by a coin representing Egypt trampled by the “Victorious Emperor”!

But the Erinyes were not dead;² the tyrant's dreams of a figure threatening with sword in hand were about to be fulfilled. In April, 217, Caracalla set out for Emesa to consult the sun-god, of which his mother's father, whose

¹ That Caracalla had intermittent attacks of insanity is asserted by many writers, who believe that, like Nero and Caligula, the breaking-down of his mind was caused by the secret administration of so-called “love philters.” *Ante*, page 91.

² The Erinyes were the Greek goddesses of Vengeance, of which the Diræ of the Roman poets are an adaptation. They proceeded upon the simple principle “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”

EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF MARCUS AURELIUS



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name he bore, had been a priest. About this time there had come addressed to him from Rome a letter in which he was warned to beware of Macrinus, his prefect of the guards, who was with him at the time.¹ By chance this letter fell into the hands of Macrinus himself, and though apparently free from thought of treachery, he saw plainly his impending fate and resolved to strike first. With the help of a disgruntled soldier the act was readily accomplished. During the journey above mentioned, Caracalla alighting from his horse one day was stabbed in the back, and his future unrolled without calling upon the oracle of the sun-god. His murderer deserved an apotheosis—instead of which he was torn to pieces by the Emperor's escort. Caracalla had reigned six years and was barely twenty-nine years of age at the time of his death.²

MACRINUS: 217-219 A. D. Marcus Opellius Macrinus was a native of Cæsarea, in Africa. That he was of the humblest origin is evident from the fact that he had fought under the *lanista*, and had his ears pierced for ear-rings,

¹ Severus not only reorganized the guards by enrolling picked men from all the legions, instead of from Italy alone as theretofore, but he employed the new cohorts in all his wars, his successors doing likewise.

² Apart from the horrors associated with his memory, the name of Caracalla recalls those magnificent baths whose stupendous ruins, next to the Colosseum the most remarkable in Rome, break upon the eye looking southeast from the house of Severus on the Palatine. The enormous size of the original structure is almost beyond comprehension; the *thermae* themselves, with marble seats for three thousand bathers, having been surrounded with a magnificent colonnade nearly a mile in length. The premature death of Caracalla preventing his completion of this vast work, it was finished by his successors, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. Among the masterpieces of art which adorned the baths were the Flora Farnese, the Hercules of Glycon, and the wonderful Farnese Bull, now in the Borbonico Museum at Naples.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

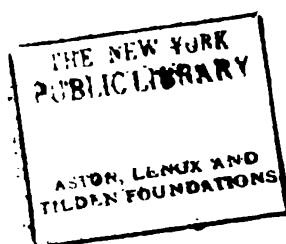
which custom was almost peculiar to the condition of slavery. By the favor of Plautianus, however, he had been brought to the attention of the Emperor Severus, who made him superintendent of the post service of the Flaminian Way. For some reason he was not involved in the catastrophe which overtook his protector at the hands of Caracalla,¹ who elevated Macrinus to the important post of prætorian prefect. The accounts of his character are contradictory; some writers asserting that he was mild and just, while others describe him as severe, false, and intriguing.

The death of Caracalla was greeted with unequivocal demonstrations of rage by the soldiers, and Macrinus having won their favor by professing the greatest sorrow for their common loss, the army was easily induced to proclaim him Emperor. He was invested with the purple on the twelfth of April, 217, and at the same time his son Diadumenianus was proclaimed Cæsar.

The widowed Empress was at Antioch when the death of her son and the accession of Macrinus were noised abroad. Her cup of bitterness was now full. Cast down from her position of supreme authority, which, conferred by her deferential husband, had, it must be admitted in justice to Caracalla, been continued by the latter, she at last found herself alone with her unhappy memories: the thoughts of her dead husband, of the fratricidal murder of one son and the assassination of the other, embittered by the reflection that the low-born adventurer who had completed the destruction of her house had himself succeeded to its power. She was suffering, too, from an incurable malady, and in a fit of despair the proud Julia Pia Domna, the "Mother of Camps," "Mother Augusta," "Mother of

¹ See *ante*, page 251.

COMMODUS



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the Senate," "Mother of the Country," as she had been variously entitled in the proud and happy days at Rome, deliberately sought through the medium of suicide that oblivion which, in her hour of supreme anguish and need, was the highest consolation her Stoic philosophy could supply.¹

Although the new Emperor was both a man of ideas and of good impulses, he was too timid in disposition and too petty in method to secure himself in the high position which he had so unexpectedly acquired. Prevented by a Parthian invasion of Mesopotamia from hastening at once to Rome, the flattering letters which, with a view to gaining their favor, he wrote to the Conscript Fathers, promising to reëstablish their influence over that of the army, aroused the jealousy of the soldiers, already provoked by some fitful disciplinary and economic measures which Macrinus had instituted. Serious reverses which he met in the war, necessitating a humiliating peace with the Armenians, increased the discontent of the army, which was further incensed by the payment to the Parthian King of a large sum by way of a "pension," so called; money which, it was openly declared among the soldiers, would have come to *them* if Caracalla had been alive. The conditions were ripe for the change which was at hand.

After the death of Caracalla's mother, her sister Mæsa, and the latter's two daughters, Soæmias and Mamæa,² had been banished to their old Syrian home at Emesa, where a legion was also sent, presumably to keep an eye upon these relations of the dead Emperor. This act of the timorous usurper proved his undoing. He should either have

¹ A statement that Julia killed herself in obedience to a secret order from Macrinus cannot be substantiated.

² See *ante*, page 249, Note 5.

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left the Syrians alone, or—as Severus would have done—destroyed them as conspirators at a blow. The three women were intelligent, courageous, and rich, and the Temple of the Sun, of which their family had long been priests, had the right of asylum and afforded shelter for both their persons and their wealth. Soæmias, the elder daughter, had a son named Bassianus—afterwards known to history as Elagabalus.¹ He was then fourteen years old, of remarkable beauty, and had already been consecrated to the priesthood of the God of Emesa. Through this boy Mæsa determined to avenge her race; and for the success of the intrigue, as Duruy says, “Mæsa sacrificed her gold, Soæmias her honor; but neither of them cared for what they lost.” Servants of the palace spread the report that Elagabalus was actually the son of Caracalla, and the immense sum of money distributed among the soldiers at the same time easily persuaded them of the truth of the story and that Bassianus was the rightful heir to the throne. The legion declared for Elagabalus, and on the sixteenth of May, 218, he was proclaimed Emperor, as Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. The revolt spread quickly; from all points in Syria deserters from Macrinus came to Emesa, and it was not long before the army of Elagabalus was strong enough to take the field. A battle occurred on the confines of Syria and Phœnicia. Macrinus might easily have won, but he had no faith in his destiny and at an early hour of the combat abandoned his troops, who thereupon took the oath to Elagabalus. Intrusting his son to some faithful servants who were to conduct him to the Parthians, the father fled to Byzantium, hoping to escape this way to Rome. He had nearly made an asylum when the soldiers of Elagabalus overtook him. While they were

¹ See next page.

DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

conducting him to the conqueror news reached the unhappy Macrinus that his boy had been taken and killed. In a paroxysm of despair he threw himself from the chariot and broke his shoulder; whereupon the guards put him to death. He was fifty-four years old and had reigned barely a year.¹

ELAGABALUS: 218-222 A. D. The new master of the Roman world, Varius Avitus Bassianus, was of pure Syrian descent, his relationship to the family of Severus having already been explained. Although his mother, Julia Soæmias, who is represented on coins as the Heavenly Virgin, was accused by Lampridius of mundane frailties, the report that Caracalla was the father of her son was a pure fabrication. And it is quite possible that this false report was itself the basis of the historian's accusation against the mother who apparently cared so little for virtue that she willingly sacrificed her reputation to advance the interests of her son.

Being high priest of the Sun at the time he was proclaimed, the Emperor chose to be called Elagabalus, which was the name of the sun-god,² the deity of his race. This god, represented by a shapeless black stone which the Emperor brought with him to Rome from Emesa, he constituted the supreme divinity of the Empire, honoring it with barbarous songs, lascivious dances, and the immolation of children. Upon this impure and sensuous religion as a foundation the effeminate young Syrian developed a character which has ever remained in the memory of men

¹ He was defeated by Elagabalus on June 8, 218, having been proclaimed April 12, 217.

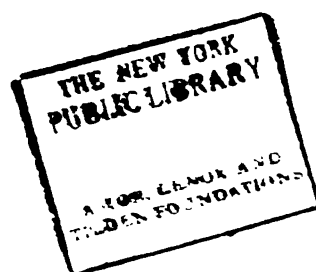
² The Græcized form of the word was Hellogabalus, by which name the Emperor was sometimes called.

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as the symbol of enthroned infamy. During the brief period of his reign, the barbarians being quiet and public agitation having subsided, Rome was at peace; and the master of all things, human and divine, was accordingly free from the necessity of self-restraint whatsoever. The pages of Lampridius fairly reek with the recital of his absurd extravagances, abominable vices, and infamous debauchery. Yielding absolutely to his mother and grandmother the direction of the State, the effeminate young voluptuary abandoned himself to a life which has been summed up as "gluttony which would have driven Vitellius to despair, lewdness such as to make Nero blush, scenes of infamy which can only be told in Latin." In the short space of his reign—less than four years—he married and repudiated in turn no less than five wives, all of eminent family, one of whom, Annia Faustina, was a descendant of Marcus Aurelius, while another, Julia Aquilia Severa, he took by force from the Altar of Vesta—a sacrilege which it is said made even the Romans of that time tremble.

While Soæmias, rather than attempting to restrain her contemptible son, if anything encouraged him in his shameful excesses, his grandmother Mæsa, who had lived in the orderly administration of Severus, did not fail to realize that the young profligate would not long be tolerated; and (perhaps fearing another Macrinus) she deliberately set about supplanting him by her grandson Alexander, the only son of her younger daughter, Julia Mamæa. Adroitly inducing Elagabalus to confer upon his cousin the title of Cæsar and adopt him as his son, she at the same time by large gifts, secretly made to the prætorians, enlisted their interest in favor of Alexander, who was as admirable in character as Elagabalus was despicable. The plan gathered force as its success became assured, and the besotted young

CRISPINA WIFE OF COMMODUS



DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

boy who was dragging the purple in the mire began to realize his danger. His first impulse was to strike openly; and he ordered the Senate to revoke the title of Cæsar which had been conferred upon Alexander, whom at the same time he threatened to kill. But the order coming to the ears of the prætorians, they raised such a tumult that Elagabalus himself narrowly escaped death. He then sought to accomplish his purpose by secret means; but the vigilance of Mamæa, who surrounded her son with trusty guards and never even allowed him to partake of food or wine that had not previously been tasted, proved too much for the weak and irresolute Emperor. The latter finally hit upon the device of circulating a report that Alexander had died, thinking that when the soldiers should have accepted the fact he would be free to assassinate his cousin without danger. The result was as tragic as the plan was absurd. Secretly informed through Mamæa that the young prince was alive, the guard invaded the palace, demanding that Alexander be produced. A tumult broke out, Elagabalus, like the guilty wretch he was, flying at the first outbreak. The guards, incited perhaps by Mamæa, resolved to end the matter once for all. The miserable young Emperor was found concealed with his mother in an outhouse, where they were both slain, the corpse of the former being dragged through the streets and flung into the Tiber, while the Senate consigned his memory to infamy. He was barely eighteen¹ and had reigned (?) three years and nine months.

ALEXANDER SEVERUS: 222-235 A. D. The last of the Syrian princes who ruled the Roman world was sixteen years of age when he became Emperor. He was proclaimed

¹ According to Herodian; Lampridius says he was twenty-one.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

under the name of Marcus Aurelius Alexander,¹ but has passed into history as Alexander Severus; having taken the name of the Macedonian hero from a temple in the city of his birth consecrated to Alexander, while that of Severus was added by the soldiers in memory of him who was by many believed, although without ground, to be the new Emperor's grandfather. And as if the black stone of Emesa² had been tumbled into the Tiber and there disappeared forever, with the mortal remains of its high priest, the new Emperor added to his official designation the title of Priest of Rome (*Sacerdos Urbis*), and the rule of the sun-god, with all of its Oriental sensuousness, was at an end.

During the reign of his predecessor, most of the important imperial functions were discharged by Soæmias, whose name appeared with those of consuls and who subscribed legislative decrees as a member of the Assembly. While fully resolved to herself retain the substance of power, the wise mother of Alexander discreetly procured the early enactment of a law forever excluding women from the Senate; and by thus openly repudiating an odious innovation of Elagabalus and his mother greatly strengthened Mamæa's prestige, which continued throughout her son's reign. Fortunately for the young Emperor, destined from the beginning to the domination of his mother, Julia Mamæa was a woman of liberal views and lofty character. Her inquiring mind and political sagacity are indicated by her correspondence with Origen,³ and with a single excep-

¹ The Senate urged Alexander to also adopt the name of Antoninus; but the Emperor nobly refused "the borrowed lustre of a great name."

² See *ante*, page 259.

³ Her association with the great theologian of the ancient Church accounts in part for the supposition that Mamæa was a Christian. There seems to be ground for the statement that she instructed Alexander in the morality of Christianity.

DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

tion,¹ she seems to have labored persistently, unselfishly, and in the main wisely for her son's happiness and the genuine welfare of the State. From early childhood Alexander had been surrounded by instructors of the highest character and integrity; thus developing by education the boy's natural tendencies towards uprightness and morality. As a result Rome once more beheld upon the Palatine the virtue, simplicity, and pure example which were there enthroned during the benign reign of Antoninus—a last gleam of sunlight before the impending gloom should descend. Amiable, simple in tastes, pure in morals, animated by a genuine desire to benefit the people and to do good in every possible way—in short, apparently basing his life upon that fundamental maxim of the Gospels, “As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them,”—this Syrian boy, fresh from the selfish, effeminate, and sensuous influences of Oriental sun-worship, “in the heart of depraved, rotten Rome, in the teeth of the debauched courtiers and reptile Senate, singling out this golden rule of conduct,”² inevitably challenges our admiration and sympathy, whether our estimate of Alexander is based upon the possibly exaggerated praises of Lamprius or the apparently unjust severity of Herodian. Although in the main following the latter, Gibbon's estimate of Alexander may nevertheless be accepted as perhaps the best possible summing-up of his character in its relation to the imperial office: “The abilities of the amiable prince seem to have been inadequate to the difficulties of the situation, the firmness of his conduct inferior to the purity of his intentions.”³

¹ See next page.

² Bonner's *Rome*, Vol. ii. page 192.

³ *The Decline and Fall*, Vol. i. chap. vi.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

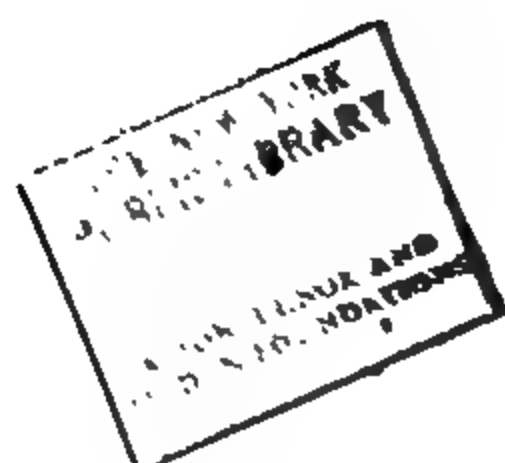
With the consent of Mamæa, Alexander first married the daughter of a patrician, whose name has been forgotten. The young Augusta is said to have loved her husband tenderly, which perhaps accounts for the jealousy displayed by Mamæa; at least no other cause is assigned for her cruelty towards the Empress, who, upon the request of his mother, whom he dared not oppose, was banished by Alexander while lamenting his hard lot.¹ Although the Emperor remarried, history has not deemed his second wife worthy of mention—the only proof of her existence being her inscription, with the title of *Augusta*, upon some coins of the period, where her name appears as Gnea Seia Herennia Sallustia Barbia Orbiana.

Although Rome was at peace during the first part of his reign, the young Emperor was constantly being brow-beaten, insulted, and robbed by the prætorians, who on one occasion actually tore in pieces before his face their præfect, the great jurisconsult Ulpian, who had tried to check their turbulence, and whom Alexander vainly endeavored to protect by covering him with the imperial purple. Neither rights nor property were respected; Emperor, consuls, Senate, and people were at the mercy of the soldiers. Only the stern hand of a Severus could have met the situation; the gentle and passionless Alexander was utterly powerless to quell the turbulent spirits whom he both feared and failed to understand.

In the tenth year of his reign the Persians under Artaxerxes invaded Roman Asia, and Alexander set out in defence of his Empire, returning after a two years' cam-

¹ Her father, having complained to the prætorians of this severity, was put to death; while she herself is thought to have shared the fate of Plautilla. See *Caracalla, ante*, page 252.

PERTINAX



DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

paign to celebrate at Rome a triumph which revived all the glories of Trajan and Severus. But the dark days were at hand. Germany had broken out into revolt, and the barbarians were ravaging Gaul. After a few months spent in preparation, Alexander, accompanied by his intrepid mother, again took the field—like Severus upon a similar occasion, never to return. His first act, when he came in contact with the enemy, sounded his doom; he sent rich gifts to the Germans with a proposal of peace—greatly angering his soldiers, who preferred both to fight and to keep the gold for themselves. Commanding the new levies which the Emperor had intrusted to him to be drilled was a gigantic Thracian named Maximin. Endowed with just enough intellect to realize that it was a time for brute force rather than for mildness and humane effort, he harangued the recruits, who were easily persuaded to accept him as leader. Covering him with a purple mantle, they marched in arms to the Emperor's tent, and the guard standing aside at the rebels' bidding, Alexander and his mother were put to death upon the spot. Thus for the wise Mamæa and the virtuous Alexander, with all their lofty aims, there came at last the same dark fate which had engulfed the conscienceless Soëmias and her infamous son. No turbid Tiber, indeed, bore their dishonored bodies to the sea, and the Senate voted an apotheosis, instead of a decree of infamy, while posterity has not failed to accord this remarkable Syrian woman and her half-Christian son a high place upon the roll of those who have wrought nobly and with honor to themselves. But who shall say that to their pagan minds such thoughts could in any wise assuage the pain and bitterness of such an end, or awaken one single spark of resignation to their evil destiny?

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MAXIMIN I — GORDIAN I — GORDIAN II — PUPIENUS — BALBINUS — GORDIAN III: 235–244 A. D. From the time of Commodus to the reign of Diocletian the soldiers were the actual masters of the Empire; and during the nine years following the death of Alexander they exercised their power by pulling down four Emperors whom the Senate had ventured to proclaim, besides murdering two others whom they themselves had selected. The reigns of these six Emperors are so interwoven that they are to be considered as merely incidents of a single administration.

Caius Julius Verus Maximin, the murderer of Alexander, was the first barbarian to attain supreme power in the State whose triumphant arms had imposed the yoke upon the savage hordes from which he sprung. He was a native of Thrace, but his father was a Goth and his mother belonged to the Alani¹; so that the blood of many wild races must have mingled in his veins. Distinguished by his gigantic stature and truly herculean strength,²—qualities which especially appealed to the warrior Severus,—he had been appointed by that Emperor, whose attention he had attracted during some games in his native land, to a position in the horse-guards.³ Under Caracalla he was advanced to the rank of centurion; but refusing to serve either Macrinus, whom he hated, or Elagabalus, whom he despised,⁴ he only returned to Court upon the accession

¹ The Alani nation was made up of a number of nomadic tribes of Eastern origin.

² He was more than eight feet in height, and it is said that he could drink seven gallons of wine and eat thirty pounds of meat in a single day; that he could move a loaded wagon, break a horse's leg with his fist, crumble stones in his hand, and tear up a small tree by the roots—a veritable Porthos in the Antique.

³ The horse-guards attended upon the person of the Sovereign.

⁴ Such discrimination does not entirely accord with his reputed lack of intelligence.

DIDIUS

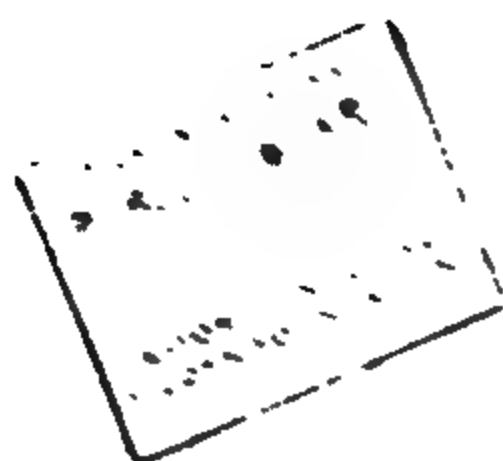


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of Alexander, by whom he was appointed tribune to the Fourth Legion, and in time to the first military command. Merciless in war and convinced that the welfare of the army was the chief end of the State—here was just the kind of man the soldiers wanted; and as at all times and in all ages, the man of the hour was accepted—his son Maximin at the same time being saluted as Cæsar.

The reign of Maximin was precisely what might be expected from a man who could so ruthlessly destroy his chief benefactor. All of the household of Alexander, his friends and his councillors, were put to death, and cruelty, oppression, robbery, and pillage were openly practised by the Emperor, whose savage example was eagerly followed by the soldiers, freed at last from the semblance of restraint which had been imposed upon them by Alexander. The Emperor, however, did not venture to visit Rome, where, as he knew, he was cordially hated both on account of his low birth and his open hostility to the classes, but seems to have deliberately sought through a victory over the barbarians to acquire some public sanction for his power. It was the mistake of Albinus repeated.¹ For while Maximin remained in Upper Pannonia to gain some inconsiderable successes over the miserable German rustics, every opportunity for conspiracies occurred at home; and although the cowardly Senate did not dare to take the initiative, Rome speedily became ripe to follow the leadership of Carthage, where the explosion occurred. Enraged by the tyranny of the Emperor's procurator for that province, the people rose, put the governor to death, and prevailed upon the aged Gordian to accept the purple. Gordian was a patrician of the bluest blood; his mother was of the family of Trajan, while through his father he claimed

¹ *Ante*, page 245.



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State. Although at the time of his elevation to power renowned only for his eloquence, Timesitheus (or Misitheus, as he is sometimes spoken of) proved to be a man of versatile genius; and by his prudence, energy, integrity, and genuine ability for administrative reform, speedily justified his right to the formal salutation of "Tutor of the State," decreed to him by the Senate. The vile crowd which had domineered the palace was suppressed, the restless prætorians subdued and restrained, while order and discipline were reëstablished in the army, which had been greatly disorganized under the turmoils and contentions of the five rivals for the purple. So that when the Persians again invaded the Empire under Sapor, guided by the wise counsels and firm hand of Timesitheus, the young Emperor gallantly relieved Antioch, which had been invested, drove the invaders back across the Euphrates and recaptured all of the Syrian cities which the Persians had conquered.¹

But alas for the wisdom and virtue which in that evil time ventured to dignify the purple. In the midst of their triumphal progress the "Tutor of the State" succumbed to that dread imperial disease against which neither a spotless nor a shameless life, neither wisdom nor folly, neither guards, gods, nor ingenuity of man whatsoever afforded protection. Timesitheus was poisoned by a bold adventurer named Philip; and the soldiers being easily persuaded that Gordian was too inexperienced to rule and command alone, Philip was associated with the young Emperor, whose days had already been numbered. A feeble effort which was undertaken in his behalf by a few devoted friends resulted merely in hastening the inevitable: the Emperor was put to death by his father-in-law's assass-

¹ Gordian's departure from Rome upon this campaign was signalized by the opening of the Temple of Janus, for the last time recorded in history.

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thing but fortunate for the Empire, the praises of the old historians were apparently merited by Decius, who was brave, energetic, straightforward, and, according to his lights, genuinely concerned for the welfare and glory of the State, in whose defence he laid down his life. He was, however, narrow-minded and superstitious enough to account for the woes of the Empire upon the theory that the gods were offended because those who blasphemed them were tolerated by the State. Decius accordingly inaugurated a widespread and shameful persecution of the Christians; and although it lasted only a few months,¹ after which all the imprisoned votaries were set free, for the time being it appeared to be a veritable war of extermination.

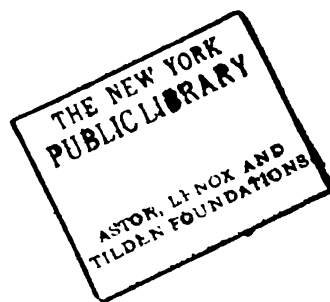
The reign of Decius was especially signalized by an invasion of the Goths, significant as the first great wave of that immense sea of barbaric marauders which gradually submerged the Empire and at last actually inundated the sacred city itself. There upon the Palatine where Romulus had built and Augustus, Severus, and Trajan had lived, this mighty force was destined to install a barbarian invader as an earnest that Rome had indeed fallen.

After the death of Philip the new Emperor had journeyed leisurely to Rome, where his two sons, Quintus Herrennius and Valens Hostilianus, were each proclaimed Cæsar. But the advance guards of the invaders had appeared in eastern Mœsia,² while the main body was fast approaching an important fortress on the Danube, which guarded the approach to Thrace. Hastily assembling his forces, Decius took the field and finally confronted the

¹ The invasion of the Goths, which soon demanded the undivided attention of the Emperor, explains why his other task was left unfinished.

² Mœsia included two provinces north of the Hæmus Mountains (now the Balkans) in northern Thrace.

JULIA PIA DOMNA WIFE OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS



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Gothic leader, who had suffered a serious repulse by Gallus (afterwards Emperor) near the city of Nicopolis, in what is now Hungary. The barbarians at first retreated and the Emperor at one time might have annihilated the entire host. But he seems to have been drawn into a trap; the Goths suddenly fell upon him with all their forces, and, as it is alleged, aided by the treachery of Gallus, they succeeded in completely routing the imperial troops, Decius and his eldest son being among the killed. It was the first time a Roman Emperor had fallen upon Roman soil at the hand of an enemy; and the death of Decius, in its moral effect, may be accounted the first great blow among the disasters which finally crushed the Empire.

GALLUS—ÆMILIANUS: 251–254 A. D. C. Vibius Trebonianus Gallus, who succeeded Decius, was a native of the island of Meninx in Africa. The highest military position which he had previously attained was that of *dux* in Moesia—the title designating only a general in command of a special expedition, with no *imperium* other than that exercised over his own soldiers, and hence inferior to that of an imperial legate at the head of the legions. Gallus was plainly a man of mediocrity, and beyond his first slight advantage over the Goths, he seems to have rendered no assistance to Decius in the latter's emergency; but the charges of treachery which were insinuated by the friends of his predecessor seem unwarranted. The Emperor, nevertheless, suffered under the taint of suspicion, which he endeavored to remove by associating with him in the Empire Hostilianus,¹ the surviving son of Decius. The latter, however, did not long escape the dread disease which infected the Palatine; whereupon the Emperor's

¹ He had been created Cæsar in his father's lifetime.

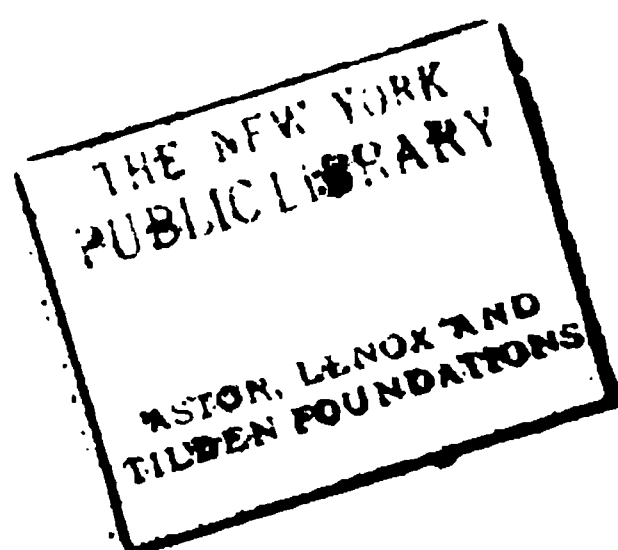
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son, Volusianus, who had married a daughter of Decius, was proclaimed Augustus. Other than a bust in the "Hall of Emperors" this son of Gallus left no trace of his claim to the imperial power.

The charms of a luxurious life at the capital city outweighed with Gallus either the dignity or safety of the State; and after concluding a disgraceful treaty with the Goths, who were not only permitted to retire with all their prisoners and booty, but were also promised a large annual payment in money, the Emperor hastened to Rome. Although between fifty and sixty years of age, Gallus resigned himself to a life of frivolity and dissipation, turning a deaf ear to all the appeals for aid which came pouring into Rome from wretched Pannonia. For the insatiable Goths had returned, and in their train stalked famine and pestilence, those twin ghosts of barbaric warfare. But soon the people began to murmur. Instead of the blasphemous Christians who had aroused the anger of the gods, it was their "coward Emperor" who was now held responsible for the national disasters; so that when the army—which had always resented the Senate's choice of Gallus—prepared to vindicate its rights, all Rome stood ready to applaud what it lacked the spirit to inaugurate.

The governor of Pannonia at this time was a Mauretanian named Æmilianus. Having engaged the army's attention by some slight successes over the Goths, he completely won the approval of the troops by distributing among them the gold which Gallus had sent for the promised tribute to the barbarians. The enraptured soldiers at once invested him with the purple, and mustering all his forces Æmilianus set out for Rome. Roused by this personal danger from the sloth and indifference which had been proof against every peril of the State, Gallus hastily de-

CLODIUS ALBINUS



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spatched Valerian to mobilize the Gallic and German legions, while he himself set out for the northern frontier. But his hour had struck. The Danubians had already crossed the Julian Alps, and the Emperor encountered them at the city of Terni, scarcely seventy miles from Rome. No battle was fought, however. The imperial troops, cherishing a hearty contempt for their effeminate Emperor, and attracted by the fame and liberality of Æmilianus, were ripe for revolt; Gallus and his son were put to death by their own soldiers, who united with the provincial army in proclaiming the victor.

Gallus had reigned three years, but scarcely as many months elapsed between the elevation and the downfall of his successor.

M. Æmilius Æmilianus was one of those men whose intense personal conceit enables them for a time, at least, to conceal indifferent ability by an occasional showy act. His selection by the army was quickly confirmed by the Senate, but both the Conscript Fathers and the soldiers reckoned without regard to Valerian and his legions, who were fast coming up from Gaul and Lower Germany. While Æmilianus was composing boastful addresses to the Senate, declaring his intention of driving out the barbarians from the northern and eastern portions of the Empire,—to which the Conscript Fathers replied by the coinage of both flattering medals and titles for “Mars the Avenger,”—the troops of Valerian suddenly debouched upon the plains of Spoleto, where Æmilianus had lain encamped ever since the death of Gallus. The bloodless “battle of Terni” was to be repeated. Awed both by the superior strength of the eastern legions and the military reputation of their leader, the murderers of Gallus themselves avenged that Emperor by presenting to Valerian the head of Æmilianus; and the

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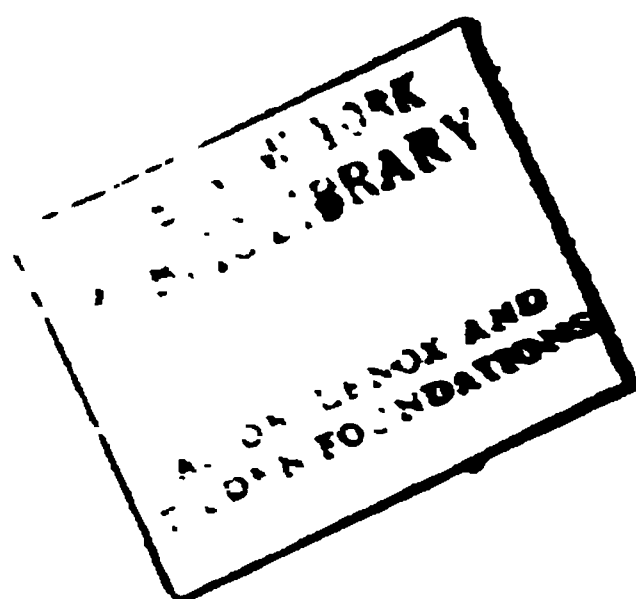
new Augustus (whose soldiers had several months earlier decorated him with the purple) now became head of the State by the unanimous voice of the Roman world.

VALERIAN—GALLIENUS—THE THIRTY TYRANTS: 254–268 A. D. Publius Licinius Valerianus was of an old Roman family, and if we may believe the ancient writers, the nobility of his character at least equalled that of his birth. He seems to have invariably sided with the better elements in the State, and as a friend of the elder Gordian he acted a spirited part in the struggle against Maximin. He had worked his way up through the grades, but had passed his sixtieth year when he attained the tribunate (under Gallus). Of unblemished character, mild and unassuming in manner, revered by Senate and people—if mankind had been allowed to choose a master, says an old writer cited by Gibbon, the choice would have fallen on Valerian. Indeed if it had not been for those terrible barbarians, Rome might well have believed that the Empire was once more to enjoy the benignancy of the first Antonines.

By the Emperor Decius, Valerian had been chosen to fill the office of censor, which had fallen into disuse since the days of Titus, who was the last incumbent, the example of Trajan, who modestly refused the honor, having become a law to the Antonines. But however qualified he may have been to maintain if not actually to restore the morals of the State,¹ and notwithstanding all the admitted excellencies of his character, Valerian proved to be anything but the man for the times and his reign was one of the most calamitous and miserable in the history of the State.

¹ The office of censor was very widespread in the line of its duty, including that of punishing offences not only against morality but against the conventional requirements of Roman custom.

PESCENNIUS NIGER



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His first important act was an index of the disasters to come. Emboldened by their recent successes, and also by the withdrawal of the frontier legions, many of which during the civil war precipitated by Æmilianus had been recalled to Italy, the barbarians were menacing the Empire as never before. With Persians in the east, Goths and Alemanni at the north, and Franks on the west, all eager to strike a deadly blow, it was apparent that one man, and he already past the prime of life, could ill sustain the weight of defending the Empire. A colleague was plainly advisable; but instead of selecting one of the many valiant and able generals who were available, self-love proved stronger than duty to the State, Valerian weakly choosing his own profligate son to defend the Empire with him. It was once more the case of Aurelius and Commodus, of Severus and Caracalla; and Valerian and Gallienus have passed into history as the virtuous, high-minded father, laboring for the welfare and dignity of the State, linked with the degenerate and vicious son, unconcernedly yawning while the purple was being dragged through the mire.

Turning over to his son the defence of the west, Valerian himself departed for the eastern frontiers, already being ravaged by Goths from the Lower Danube and by the Persians under Sapor, for nearly half a century one of Rome's bitterest enemies. Greece was overrun by the former, while Sapor, first taking possession of Armenia and Mesopotamia, finally crossed the Euphrates and entered Syria. Valerian, who had enjoyed not one moment of rest or peace since the troops saluted him as "Master" of the Roman world, hastened to Antioch shortly afterwards, pushing Sapor back to the Euphrates, where upon the old battle-ground an encounter occurred. Worn out with the hardships of their protracted campaign, which had

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It is next to impossible to present a chronological statement of a reign so torn by faction and trampled by invasion; the whole period, as pointed out in Gibbon, being one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity. And while most historians agree that these so-called "Thirty Tyrants" included only nineteen who were actually invested with the purple, there is a diversity in the nomenclature of the pretenders,¹ for the reason probably that many of the usurpers barely flitted across the public stage, leaving a certain fact but an uncertain personality.

(1) In the year 258, upon setting out for Rome from Gaul, where Postumus remained in command, instead of intrusting to the latter his son Saloninus, Gallienus left the young Cæsar in the care of the tribune Silvanus at Cologne. Offended by the Emperor's apparent distrust, Postumus appealed to the legions, with whom he was immensely popular, and who eagerly embraced his proposition to march against Cologne. After a stout resistance the besieged city was taken, Saloninus and his protector were put to death, and the conqueror was proclaimed Augustus—Britain and Spain also taking the oath to him a little later.

Like almost all of the provincial usurpers, Postumus was of low birth; but possessing both courage and the confidence of the Gallic provinces, where he was born and had always lived, the new Augustus maintained himself for ten years—withstanding even the imperial prestige when in the year 265 Gallienus undertook, without success, to avenge his son and recover Gaul. The Gallic Emperor was finally killed during a tumult caused by refusing his soldiers the pillage of Mayence, which had rebelled against

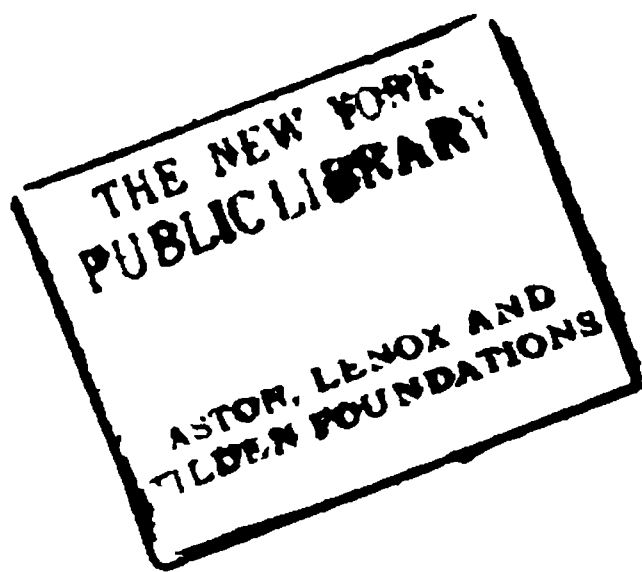
¹ Gibbon, for example, in presenting his list of names, cites a different one compiled by Captain Smyth in his *Catalogue of Medals*.

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DECLINE OF SPLENDOR

his authority. With a single exception he was the most remarkable of the nineteen usurpers.

(2) Upon the death of Postumus, Lælianus was invested with the Gallic purple, and according to his coins he won some notable victories over the Germans. He was, however, soon murdered by his soldiers, angry at being compelled to labor in rebuilding the Rhine forts.

(3) Two years before his death, Postumus had associated with himself an Italian general named Marcus Piavonius Victorinus, who had brought over several legions to the support of the Gallic Cæsar. Allied to a rich and influential family, and being very popular in Gaul, Victorinus became so firmly established that he appears to have inspired Gallienus with a wholesome dread, and was allowed to rule his province without opposition from Rome. He, however, speedily paid the penalty of an evil life, having been assassinated at Cologne by one of his own officers whom he had greatly wronged.¹ Less than a year had elapsed since the death of his predecessor, whose murder Victorinus is said to have instigated.

(4) Another competitor for the Gallic purple was a blacksmith named Marius, who came upon the scene just before the death of Victorinus. The "Augustan History" assigns to Marius the shortest reign in its annals, allowing him only three days of imperial grandeur; "on the first of which he was made Emperor, on the second he reigned, and on the third he was dethroned." There is evidence, however, that Marius held the boards for three or four months. He is said to have been endowed with "matchless strength, intrepid courage, and blunt honesty." But he perished at the hand of an old comrade whom he had slighted in his hour of dignity—struck down, it is said, by

¹ Coins of Victorinus are said to have been found in England.

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a blade which the murderer and his victim had one day forged together.

(5) Upon the death of Victorinus, his mother, Victorina, who was a woman of masculine habit, took a hand at Emperor-making, the Gallic legions at her instance proclaiming as Emperor Pius Esuvius Tetricus, who was a relative of Victorina. Tetricus had been a senator, but without military experience and of a retiring disposition he was unfitted for the stormy life upon which those who then adventured the purple were expected to embark. Tetricus therefore wisely retired to Bordeaux and there "busied himself about nothing"; so that not being esteemed a dangerous character, he remained undisturbed during the remainder of the reign of Gallienus and the four years following. After the death of Victorina, whose resolute soul had theretofore largely upheld him, the peaceful-minded Tetricus deliberately sought relief from his imperial functions. In the third year of the reign of Aurelian, he wrote begging that Emperor to deliver him "from the miscreant legions"; and when Aurelian came with his army Tetricus betrayed his own troops to the conqueror. Although led with Zenobia in Aurelian's great triumph at Rome after the fall of Palmyra, Tetricus was afterwards admitted to the friendship of the Emperor, receiving from him the government of Lucania, while his son became a senator. Looking back upon the fate of his eighteen associates in imperial pretension, one imagines that Tetricus would require little time to answer Aurelian's question: Whether it were not more desirable to administer a province in Italy than to reign beyond the Alps? It is possible that he died a natural death.

(6) After the captivity of Valerian the all-powerful Sapor selected as a candidate for the purple in the East an ob-

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scure adventurer from Antioch named Cyriades, who was accordingly proclaimed by the cowed remnant of the imperial army. It is not improbable that Cyriades purchased the favor of Sapor by an act of treachery; at all events, he straightway conducted the Persians to his native city, which was surprised and sacked by the invaders. After the fall of Antioch the Persians easily overran the adjoining countries, and before long the entire East trembled at the name of Valerian's oppressor, whose conquests were marked by wanton and unrelenting cruelty.

(7, 8) For a long time the triumphal march of the Persians was practically unopposed. The only two men in the East who were capable of defending the Empire were Macrianus, one of Valerian's generals, and Balista, who had been the prætorian prefect, and being totally without assistance from Rome, they at first found it next to impossible to rouse the courage of the provinces. They, however, finally succeeded in collecting the scattered remnants of the Syrian army and were fortunately assisted at a critical moment by the Prince of Palmyra, who, after being insulted and threatened by Sapor, had decided to cast in his lot with the Romans; Odenathus also inducing a large band of Arabs from the southern deserts to enlist with him. The Persians, being now both outnumbered and partially surrounded, were forced to retreat, being finally thrust across the Euphrates with great slaughter and with not only the loss of their booty but—what was probably of far more importance to Sapor—with the capture of a large part of the Persian harem. Cyriades, the renegade Augustus, was taken and burned alive by the enraged Syrians; Balista and Macrianus assumed the purple, while Odenathus, to whom the credit of the Persians' expulsion was largely due, contented himself with the title of King

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bestowed by the Arabs, and the position of chief of the imperial forces in the East, conferred upon him by Gallienus.

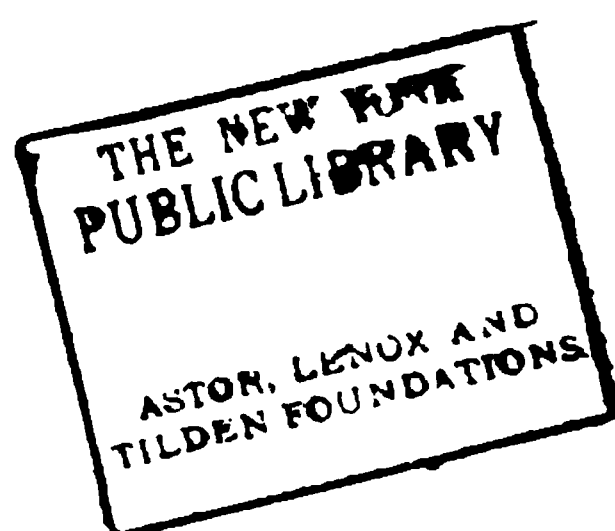
Macrianus was a soldier of fortune who had risen from the ranks to a high position both in the army and in the confidence of Valerian. But he lacked the essential qualities of a ruler; instead of restoring order and safety in the provinces and thus consolidating his power, he recklessly resolved to at once gain possession of the whole Empire; and with an army of only thirty thousand men, he set out for Europe. Warned doubtless by Odenathus, who was both prudent and loyal, Gallienus despatched his Emperor-killer Aureolus¹ to intercept the Eastern usurper. The matter was easily accomplished; the forces of Macrianus were routed and their leader, with his son of the same name, put to death.

(9) Upon his departure from the East, Macrianus had left his son Quietus, who had also been proclaimed Augustus, and his colleague Balista to govern Asia. Upon news of the defeat of the Syrian army, Odenathus at once marched against Quietus, who shut himself up in Emesa, but was quickly overcome and suffered the usual fate; while Balista was shortly afterwards assassinated.

(10) The confidence reposed in Odenathus was strengthened materially by his services in the revolt of Macrianus and his colleagues, and two years later the Arab chief succeeded to the purple by proclamation of Gallienus himself—probably the most popular act of his entire reign. Odenathus interests us both as the only one of the provincial Emperors whose personality attracts attention, and as the husband of the celebrated Zenobia. Not excepting Cleopatra, from whom she traced her descent and whom she is

¹ See *post*, page 290.

CARACALLA



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said to have surpassed in beauty, as she certainly excelled her in morality and valor, the Queen of Palmyra is easily the most remarkable woman who has come down to us in Roman history. Combining the charms of beauty and femininity with a masculine ardor and understanding, highly educated and with a constitution inured to fatigue, thus enabling her to accompany Odenathus upon his campaigns, it is easy to believe that both the fortitude and inspiration of the Palmyrian were drawn largely from his beautiful and devoted wife, who, in the language of an eminent historian, "soon became the friend and companion of a hero."

According to some writers Odenathus was a prince of the Saracens; other authorities merely accord him descent from a noble family in Palmyra. At all events, he was the chief person in the "City of Palms" at the time of Sapor's invasion; and after their splendid victories over the "Great King," Odenathus and his illustrious consort found in every quarter a ready acquiescence in his designation as a colleague of Gallienus. But he was not long to enjoy the fruits of his reward from Rome. Returning from a successful expedition against some Gothic invaders of Asia Minor, he stopped near Emesa to engage in his favorite pastime of hunting, and was there assassinated by a nephew smarting under a justly administered rebuke from his uncle. His death occurred perhaps a year before that of Gallienus, and without awaiting authority from the latter, Zenobia herself assumed the government, which some years later she surrendered only to Aurelian in person.¹

While the bloody purple was thus being tossed about in the East and the West, the other provinces were also indulging, although to a less extent, in the excitements of

¹ *Post*, page 298.

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Emperor-making. In Illyria and Pannonia three of these sham rulers were set up and pulled down; while Thessaly and Achaia in Europe, Pontus and Isauria in Asia Minor, and Carthage and Egypt in Africa each furnished one.

(11, 12) About the time that Macrianus was preparing to cross over into Europe,¹ the fever of unrest which was abroad had reached Achaia and Thessaly, and these provinces resolved to participate in the imperial foundations which had come into vogue. In the former the pro-consul, a talented general named Valens, was proclaimed Emperor, while in Thessaly the purple was bestowed upon Calpurnius Piso, a man of the highest rank, belonging to an illustrious family which from Augustus to Alexander Severus had furnished a consul in every generation—the only family, as Gibbon observes, which had survived the tyranny of the Cæsars. But the moment was inopportune for Emperor-making in that part of the world; the provinces were poor, there were few troops, and on either side were the approaching forces of Gallienus and the Eastern usurper. Valens became suspicious of Piso, and the descendant of Numa² was assassinated by emissaries of the low-born Achaian, who, thinking to consolidate his power, assumed the name of Thessalicus. He was soon put out of the way by his own soldiers.

(13) Of Saturninus, who was proclaimed in Pontus, beyond the fact that he perished in the traditional manner, we know nothing except the remark he is said to have made to the soldiers who invested him: "Comrades, you lose a good general and create a worthless Emperor." His philosophy doubtless prepared him for the inevitable stroke of the sword.

(14) Trebellianus was another usurper who donned the

¹ *Ante*, page 286. ² The Pisos claimed descent from Numa Pompilius.

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purple in Asia Minor. The province of Isauria, lying over against the Taurus Mountains, had never been fully civilized by Rome; and Trebellianus was chief of the robber mountaineers who had always existed, but whose depredations became more widespread under the present disorganization. He did not long escape the sword, at the hand of one of the Roman lieutenants. But his savage followers, having tasted again the sweets of independence, resolved to forever shake off the imperial yoke; and for centuries thereafter the Isaurians remained a nation of barbarian robbers and pirates. It was the one lasting change effected by the provincial usurpations.

(15, 16) When Celsus was being proclaimed at Carthage, no purple mantle being available, the robe of the *dea celestis* was placed upon him; whereupon some of the bystanders, scandalized by such impiety, resolved to kill the new Augustus. The deed was accomplished by some of his own soldiers on the seventh day of his reign. His Egyptian colleague Æmilianus succumbed almost as quickly under an attack by Theodotus, who was in quest of wheat for Rome. The Nile Emperor was made prisoner and strangled in his dungeon.

(17) In the same year that witnessed the elevation of Postumus the troops of Pannonia bestowed a similar honor upon their general Ingenuus, whose designation was enthusiastically ratified by the entire province. Ingenuus was a skilful soldier who had won renown in the border warfare with the Goths and Sarmatians, and it was expected that like Postumus he would find no difficulty in upholding the imperial dignity of his warlike province. But for some reason the Emperor at Rome, ordinarily so indifferent to rival pretensions, took speedy note of the revolt on the Danube, and sent Aureolus, one of his best

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lieutenants, to punish the usurper. Defeated in the first encounter, Ingenuus committed suicide, the victor, under an explicit order from his imperial master, inflicting a bloody punishment upon the unfortunate Pannonians. The order, which is still extant, may be quoted as illustrative of the occasional savageness displayed by Gallienus: "It is not enough that you exterminate such as have appeared in arms; the chance of battle might have served me as effectually. The male sex of every age must be extirpated; provided that in the execution of the children and old men you can contrive means to save our reputation. Let every one die who has dropped an expression, who has entertained a thought against me, against *me*, the son of Valerian. Remember that Ingenuus was made Emperor; tear, kill, and hew to pieces." The soft cruelty of a Tiberius, the fierce egoism of a Nero, and the unrestrained savagery of a Caracalla are all found in this unrivalled mandate of Gallienus.

(18) Nothing daunted by the fate of his predecessor, a Dacian named Regalianus (who claimed his descent from the celebrated Decebalus of Trajan's reign), after gaining some military successes over the Sarmatians, accepted the imperial office from the army and the provincials, alike forgetful—or perhaps because of the retribution which had overtaken their last act of rebellion. He met the usual violent death, presumably in a revolt of his own people.

(19) As a reward for carrying out his master's orders against Ingenuus and the Pannonians, Aureolus received the government of Illyria. The overthrow of Macrianus¹ increased his prestige, and after strengthening his power in every possible way, towards the end of the reign of Gallienus when the general disorder was at its climax, Aureo-

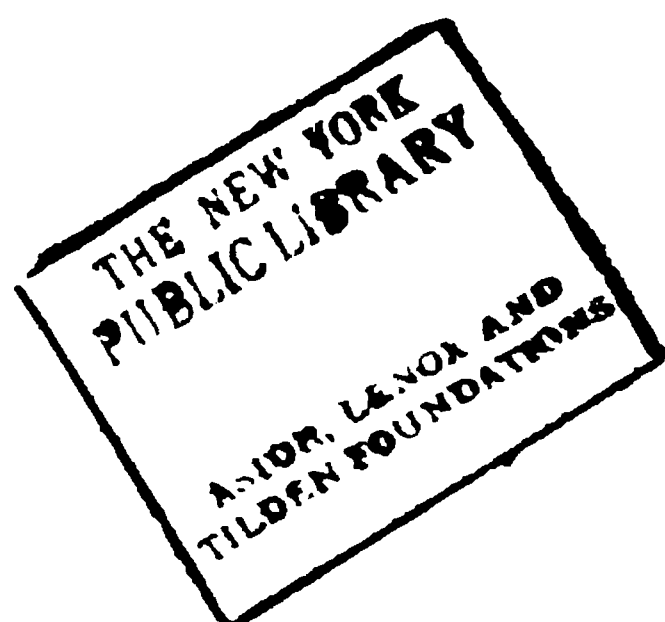
¹ *Ante*, page 286.

MACRINUS



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lus accepted the title of Emperor from the army on the Upper Danube, and crossing the Alps marched rapidly to Milan, which he occupied as a base for his intended operations against Rome itself. As long as the pretenders had contented themselves with provincial grandeur, Gallienus saw no reason to interfere with their ambition, which never in the slightest interfered with his personal pleasures and diversions. But when the standard of revolt was erected upon the sacred soil of Italy, even this imperial trifle was awakened from his habitual indolence; and wrenching himself from the luxurious life on the Tiber, the Emperor gathered together the Italian troops and marched towards the Po. The armies met about thirty miles from Milan, and after a stubborn conflict the invaders were defeated, Aureolus, who was severely wounded, barely escaping with his life to Milan, which was at once besieged by Gallienus. The usurper was indeed in sore straits, but it was not for him that the Parcæ were first preparing; it was the life-thread of the dissolute and careless son of Valerian which had unwound, and for which the shears were ready. Again the Roman purple was to be rent by a blow from behind. Disgusted at last with a master who inspired neither respect, nor love, nor fear, the prætorians decided to resume their time-honored trade. Late at night, while the Emperor was still at table, the false alarm was raised that Aureolus was attacking in force, and Gallienus, rushing from his tent, was stabbed in the back by the assassins. Aureolus himself perished a little later when Milan surrendered to the next Emperor, by whom the Illyrian pretender was promptly executed. Thus of the nineteen individuals who during the reign of Gallienus had flaunted the purple in various parts of the Empire which most of them helped to drag through the mire, Tetricus was the



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importuned to “deliver himself from Tetricus and Zenobia”—as if these pretenders were the only enemies who were abroad; to which the Emperor nobly replied, “The matter of the usurpers concerns myself alone; that of the Goths is of importance to the State.”

Fortunate indeed it was for the Empire that Gallienus, who thought always of himself and of the State not at all, had been replaced by a leader who was at least concerned for the State *and* himself. For never since the great Cimbic invasion had Rome been in such danger from without, and a second Marius only could meet the emergency. Nearly half a million savage invaders who had “burned their ships behind them” were in motion, resolved to take permanent possession of the mild and sunny provinces of the south, which offered such a wide contrast to their own bleak and wind-swept countries. If the invaders had acted in unison, the Empire, sorely weakened by its self-inflicted wounds, might perhaps have been swept away. But the Alemanni,¹ too impatient to await their Sarmatian allies, all of whose ships were not yet completed, crossed the Alps alone. Although this invasion occurred only a few months after his accession, Claudius had already reformed the Italian army to a large measure of its old-time effectiveness and the Germans were completely routed. Elated by their victory, the imperial troops enthusiastically followed their intrepid leader to Illyria; and after crossing that province and Macedon by forced marches, approached the valley of the Margus, in Moesia, where the main body of the Goths were operating, totally unaware of their enemy's presence. But the dangers of the undertaking were great. “I must tell you the truth, Conscript Fathers,” Claudius wrote the Senate; “three hundred thousand bar-

¹ “Men of all races.”

ELAGABALUS



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

barians have invaded Roman territory. If I am successful you will acknowledge we have deserved well of our country. If I am not victorious remember whom I follow. The State is exhausted and we fight after Valerian, after Ingenuus, after Regalianus, after Lælianus, after Postumus, after Celsis, after many others who have been detached from the State on account of the contempt inspired by Gallienus. We are deficient in bucklers and swords and javelins. Tetricus is master of the Gallic and Spanish provinces, which are the strength of the Empire; and—I am ashamed to say it—our archers are all serving under Zenobia. Whatever little we may do, our successes will be as great as you have a right to expect.”

It was an admirable statement of the situation, and overwhelmed Rome with both shame and apprehension. But the result far exceeded what might reasonably have been expected, from the modesty of the Emperor's expressions. Skilfully occupying a strong position directly between the two divisions of the immense Gothic host, Aurelian was at once despatched against the southern enemy, and when he returned successful, Claudius crossed the mountains and encountered the main body of the Goths at Naissus (Nissa). The conflict was long and sanguinary, but the victory finally was with the Romans. Fifty thousand of the barbarians were left upon the field of battle, the remainder taking refuge in the mountain fastnesses, where, after many had succumbed to famine and exposure, the wretched remnants were successively overtaken by Claudius and put to the sword. The Gothic host was actually annihilated.

The message to the Senate in which Claudius announced his victory might well have served as a model for some of those “Homeric strophes from the field of battle,” as

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Victor Hugo terms the bulletins of the Grand Army. "We have destroyed," says Claudius, "a hundred and twenty thousand Goths and sunk two thousand vessels. The water of the river is concealed under the bucklers that it bears along with it, the banks under broken swords and lances, the fields under the bones of the dead. The roads are all choked with the enormous baggage the enemy has left behind."

The Empire went wild with joy; such a triumph for Roman arms had not been known in centuries. And might not this second Marius also be expected to prove himself "less great in having overcome the Cimbri than in having quelled in Rome the aristocracy of the nobility?"¹ But alas for Claudius; the hopes which he had inspired were to meet their full fruition only under the great general who came after him. In the flush of his triumph he contracted the plague which was ravaging the northern provinces, and died in the fifty-fourth year of his age and the third of his reign. High upon the scroll of Rome's ablest defenders history has written the name of Claudius Gothicus, which was bestowed by a genuinely grateful Senate and people; while the army mourned its hero by at once complying with his dying wishes in proclaiming Aurelian as his successor.

QUINTILLUS—AURELIAN: 270–275 A. D. When Claudius was setting out upon his campaign against the Goths, he had left his brother, M. Aurelius Quintillus, with a few legions at Aquileia, to guard that important gateway of Italy.² With the news of the Emperor's death, the Aquileia

¹ Mirabeau.

² Aquileia was situated at the northern extremity of the Adriatic, about midway between Venice and the Julian (now the Carnic) Alps.

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leian legions proclaimed Quintillus, who, being nearer Rome than Aurelian, was acknowledged by the Senate. Aurelian was on the Danube with the Emperor at the time of the latter's death. Shortly afterwards he started for Rome, and upon learning of his approach to Aquileia, Quintillus opened his veins, according to the old fashion.

L. Domitius Aurelianus was well fitted to take up the sword which his predecessor relinquished. He was born in Illyria, his father having been a freedman of the Senator Aurelius, while his mother was a priestess of the Sun, in the small Danubian village where they lived. Aurelian was a born fighter, and in some respects proved himself as great a general as the Empire ever produced. Severe in discipline, exacting for the service, of the strictest personal morality, which he also insisted upon in his soldiers, disdainful of pleasure, of unbounded energy, and apparently concerned alone for the glory of the State, the destruction of its enemies domestic and foreign, and the rehabilitation of the dignity and power of an undivided imperial office, his reign produced the same results which came from that of Septimius Severus, whom Aurelian in fact greatly resembled. The times were right for just such a character.

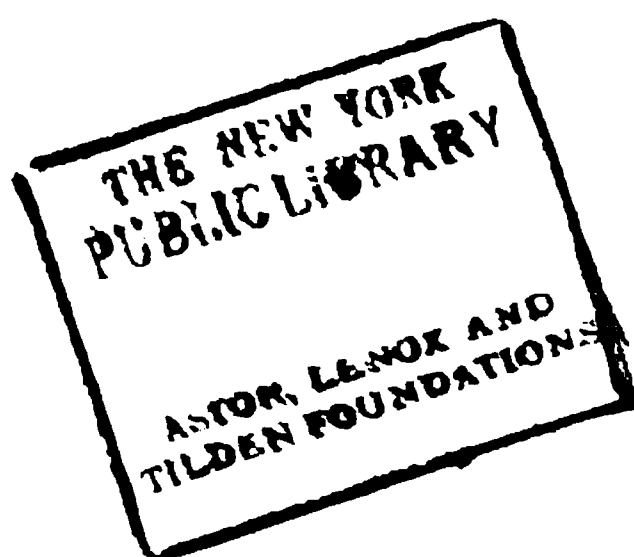
Scarcely had the Emperor returned to Rome when the Juthungi and Vandals invaded Pannonia, where Claudius had been in waiting for them at the time of his death. Returning in all haste to the northern border, Aurelian first defeated the enemy and then cut their line of retreat to the Danube; when completely humiliated and promising submission, they were finally allowed to return home. But after a few months the Vandals returned and although again victorious, Aurelian, hard pushed by a fresh invasion of Italy by the Alemanni, reluctantly purchased peace with the Vandals by ceding Dacia, the Danube thus becoming

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the boundary for the first time since Trajan's conquest. So that at last "the God Terminus" had fallen back. In the meantime the Germans had traversed Cisalpine Gaul with fire and sword, and it required all of the Emperor's energy and courage to turn the tables and destroy the invaders. Almost immediately followed a formidable revolt at Rome, in which it is said seven thousand soldiers alone perished; and after punishing these home disturbers with his customary severity, the indefatigable Emperor set out for the East, where Zenobia yet maintained her imperial court. Arrived at Palmyra, he sent a message commanding the widow of Odenathus to recognize his sovereignty; to which the Queen haughtily replied, "No person has ever dared demand what your letter asks. You wish me to surrender myself as if you did not know that Cleopatra preferred to die rather than owe her life to a master." Palmyra was strongly fortified and was stubbornly defended; but it was no upstart provincial who was now knocking at the gates, and in the end the city fell. Zenobia, flying upon her swiftest dromedary, was overtaken near the Euphrates and brought into the presence of the conqueror. "Why," sternly demanded Aurelian, "do you insult the majesty of the Roman Emperor?" to which this daughter of the desert naïvely answered, "I acknowledge you as an Emperor, since you are able to conquer; but the Gallieni, the Aureoli, and others like them were not Emperors."

Leaving a small garrison in the captured city, the Emperor set out upon his return. Halfway across Thrace the news overtook him that the Saracens had revolted, had murdered the garrison and proclaimed one Antiochus as Emperor. Without an instant's delay this man of iron determination raced back through Asia Minor, entered Palmyra like a whirlwind, and, as in the case of Caracalla

JULIA MÆSA



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

at Alexandria, although, of course, with greater provocation, turned the city over to his troops. For three days the beautiful oasis of the Palms was plundered and partly burned; it never recovered from the blow and now lies buried beneath the sands of the desert.

From the smoking ruins of Palmyra, Aurelian journeyed to Egypt, where his general, Probus, had been fighting it out with a sham Emperor named Firmus, who had been "proclaimed" by the inhabitants after the expulsion of Zenobia's representatives. The Emperor made short work of this impostor, whose army was cut to pieces, he himself being crucified; and after establishing a strong Roman garrison, to overawe the populace, the imperial restorer returned to Europe leaving a tranquillized East behind him. Everything being in order at Rome, Aurelian at once set out against the last remaining rebel—the Gallic Emperor Tetricus. It was his easiest task,¹ and in the fourth year of his reign he journeyed once more to Rome and there celebrated one of the most magnificent of the three hundred and fifty triumphs which had hitherto been counted in the history of the Eternal City. Behind the chariot of the conqueror came Zenobia,² staggering beneath the weight of three immense gold chains, and Tetricus and his son, "who walked clad in the scarlet chlamys³ and wearing the Gallic braccæ⁴ that the people might

¹ *Ante*, page 284.

² Aurelian bestowed upon Zenobia a handsome villa near that of Hadrian, and here the beautiful Queen of the East passed the rest of her days, her children marrying into the most illustrious Roman houses. The happy ending of Tetricus has been pointed out. *Ante*, page 284.

³ The chlamys was an oblong piece of cloth thrown over the left shoulder, the open ends being fastened with clasps on the right shoulder.

⁴ A loose garment resembling modern trousers, worn by Gauls and Asiatics.

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shall rule with and through you," Tacitus had said. The act was both puerile and in the end fatal to the aspirations of the Senate, the election of Tacitus having been not extravagantly termed the last political act of the Roman Republic.

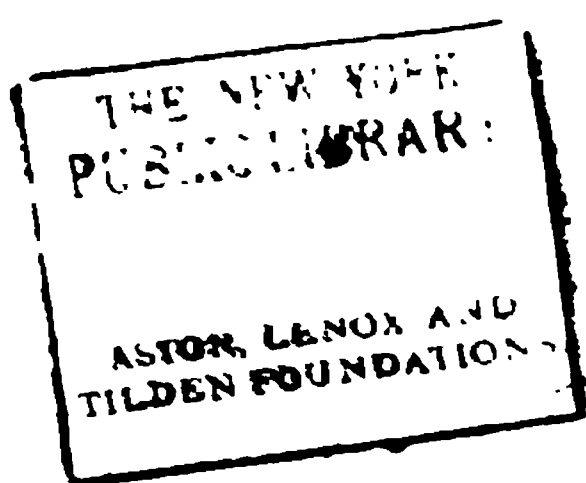
The new Emperor had barely time to accomplish the one thing for which posterity owes him its lasting gratitude before the inevitable tragedy overtook him. Tracing his descent from the great historian "who ranks beyond dispute in the highest place among men of letters of all ages,"¹ the Emperor caused the "Histories" and "Annals" to be placed in all the public libraries; and but for this act, as Duruy has pointed out, the tragic history of the Cæsars might have been lost forever.² Upon the heels of this noteworthy deed and the enactment of some well-meaning but ineffectual statutes, came the news that the barbarians had again broken loose. Quickly appreciating the change that had occurred at Rome, the Alani and Goths had invaded Asia Minor; and thither painfully journeyed the poor old Emperor to show himself to the army. An immense donative to the troops caused them momentarily to overlook the contrast which they could not fail to draw between the enfeebled old civilian and the martial figure which had so recently filled their horizon. But when a little later the pacific old man sent more of his gold to the barbarians themselves, it was too much for men who under Claudius and Aurelian had paid tribute with the sword. Once more the old disease broke out and at the hands of his soldiers Tacitus yielded up the purple robe which had been forced upon him barely six months before.

When he became Emperor the sons of Tacitus were

¹ *Encyc. Brit.* Tit. Tacitus. ² *Hist. Rome*, Vol. vii. chap. xcvi.

ALEXANDER SEVERUS

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REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

only boys, their father having married late in life, and he accordingly requested that his brother, M. Annius Florianus, be made consul. But the Conscript Fathers, jealous of their new-found power and averse to a step which might thereafter impair its free exercise by unduly dignifying the new Emperor's family, replied that the lists were full. Tacitus had thereupon appointed his brother prætorian prefect, and with the news of the Emperor's death came that of Florian's investiture by his soldiers. So that by refusing him the consulship and thus leaving him to find preferment through the army, the Senate had actually opened the door to that which they intended to bar out.

But in naming Florian the troops had apparently proceeded more from a desire to forestall action on the part of the Senate than from any personal regard for their commander, who, although an estimable character, was not one who would naturally be chosen as leader by soldiers in the field. The real candidate of the army was a general named Probus; and as soon as his consent to accept the purple had been obtained by the Syrian legions of which he was in command, the unfortunate Florian, after a reign of barely three months, exchanged his imperial robe for a shroud, bestowed by the same hands which had tendered him the purple.

PROBUS: 276-282 A. D. M. Aurelius Probus was another of the famous Illyrian generals who rolled back the great waves of barbaric invasion which swept the frontier provinces during the last half of the third century. Although he claimed to be of Roman origin, Probus was a compatriot of Aurelian, having been born at Sirmium, not far from the little Danubian village where the boyhood of his great predecessor had been passed. His father, com-

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encing life as a peasant, finally became a tribune; and Probus had obtained the same rank at an unusually early age under Valerian, by whom the young soldier was highly esteemed. He fought with growing distinction through all the border wars, until at last as a special mark of favor the Emperor Aurelian intrusted him with the Tenth Legion, whose leaders, as he significantly reminded the young general, had usually become Emperors. He was in fact the only logical candidate for the purple when Aurelian died; which Tacitus himself acknowledged by writing him "The Senate has appointed me Emperor; but know this, that the greater part of the burden will rest upon your shoulders. We all know your worth and you will share with me the consulship of the coming year. Aid us then in our times of need."

By his first public acts after being saluted by the legions, Probus indicated that the measure of his abilities was not limited by military accomplishments. In a letter to the Senate he modestly declined to accept the title which his soldiers had conferred, until the Conscript Fathers should approve; and when informed of the acclamations with which he had been proclaimed at the Capitol, he despatched another message to the effect that henceforth all imperial ordinances would be subject to the Senate's confirmation. The cup of the Fathers was now overflowing—the restoration of senatorial authority seemed so complete; and the tactful Probus was thus assured of the active coöperation of the city as well as the army in the arduous undertakings which he had planned.

After a brief stay in Rome, the Emperor proceeded to Gaul, where he drove out the Franks and Alemanni, who since the death of Aurelian had been devastating that province; and to prevent future incursions constructed a

REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

massive wall, flanked by huge towers, from the Danube to the Rhine. He thence passed along the entire Danubian frontier, destroying many scattered bands of barbarians who had been terrorizing the northern provinces—among them a fierce German tribe called Lygians, which he absolutely obliterated.¹ From Thrace he journeyed to Asia Minor, with sword still in hand, and finally returned to Rome by way of Egypt, thus completing one of those frontier inspections which Severus and Aurelian had considered a *sine qua non* to the maintenance as well of internal order as efficient defence.

The suppression of some revolts in Britain, Gaul, and Egypt left the Empire entirely tranquillized; and the Emperor was at last free to devote his energies to his long-planned work of building up those provinces which had suffered the most seriously in the wars and insurrections of the past forty years. In Thrace, which was almost completely devastated, he colonized one hundred thousand Germans called Bastarnæ, who were seemingly glad in this way to escape the uncertainties of their nomadic life; in certain parts of Gaul which fire and sword had turned into a desert, he inaugurated the planting of vineyards, some of which are said to be still existing; while everywhere he engaged in the most extensive public works tending to the physical improvement of the Empire.

But Probus was too good for Rome. And in the midst of his labors for the restoration of that which he had so largely aided in staying from collapse, death overtook the valiant general, at the very prime of his hopes and energies. Unwilling that the immense army should continue a dead weight upon the State, during the interim of war he

¹ The Lygii, who lived between the Oder and the Vistula, never again appeared in history.

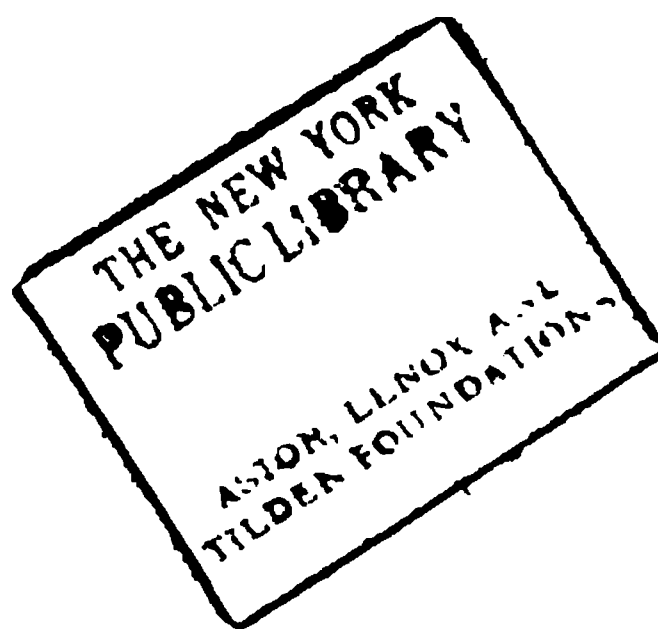
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

had largely employed the soldiery in the building of roads and canals. Unlike their general, the legionaries were unwilling to change the sword for the pickaxe; and enraged at being compelled to toil in the heat of a summer day, they mutinied, attacked the Emperor in a tower from whence he was superintending the work, and put him to death. He was mourned by all classes, including even his murderers, who are said to have wept over his body. Probus was fifty years old and had reigned six years.

CARUS: 282–288 A. D. Upon the death of Probus another Illyrian succeeded to the purple in the person of Marcus Aurelius Carus, who was proclaimed by the army, the Conscript Fathers being entirely ignored in the transaction. Carus was an able general as well as a man of rank, having filled many high offices, including that of pro-consul. He had been a favorite of the late Emperor, whose murderers received no mercy from the man who had profited by a crime in which he had no part.

At the news of the death of Probus, who had so effectually cowed the northern hordes, the latter again set their faces towards the south, and Upper Pannonia was once more overrun. Leaving his son Carinus in charge of the West, Carus set out from Rome with a formidable army, and speedily convinced the invading Quadi that Rome's present defender was a worthy successor to Aurelian and Probus, whose names had become a byword of fear to all the savage tribes. After soundly punishing the marauders and restoring order in the province, Carus determined to carry out the project which Probus is said to have formed of conquering Persia. At the head of a vast army he traversed Illyria and Thrace, and passing swiftly through Asia Minor, crossed the Tigris and captured Ctesiphon—

SARCOPHAGUS OF ALEXANDER SEVERUS AND MAMÆA



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beyond which it had been foretold that no Roman Emperor could go. The saying proved a convenient prophecy for the army, who began to find the forced marches and fierce Eastern sun quite as irksome as the ditch-digging of Probus; indeed it is supposed that in this case the soldiers were themselves the oracle. However this may have been, the news one day came to Rome that while Carus was resting in his tent during a storm he had instantly been killed by a "flash of lightning," which also set fire to the tent, the dead body of the Emperor being entirely consumed. It is impossible to deny that this may have been true; and lightning or prætorian steel, it was all one to Carus, dead at Ctesiphon after a reign of fifteen months.

CARINUS—NUMERIANUS: 283–285 A. D. Numerianus, the younger son of Carus, had accompanied his father to Persia; and after the fulfilment of the oracle, Numerianus received the title of Augustus from the army. Carinus, who was at Rome, also assumed the purple—which indeed had practically been accorded him during his father's lifetime.

The transition from Carus to Numerianus was quite as abrupt as was the succession of the aged and scholarly Tacitus to the vigorous and warlike Aurelian. Numerianus had a delicate constitution and was of shy and retiring disposition. Utterly wanting in military instinct, he was only too glad to intrust the conduct of the army to his father-in-law, the prætorian prefect Aper, who hastened to lead the willing soldiers back into Roman territory, after regaining which they slowly journeyed towards Europe. The young Emperor, who was suffering from an affection of the eyes, travelled in a closed litter and was rarely visible even when the army was at rest. Just as the European

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frontier was reached a rumor was circulated that Numerianus was dead; and the guards, rushing to the imperial tent, found that for several days they had been carrying the mortal remains of their unfortunate young ruler.

Suspicion naturally rested on Aper, who had not revealed his son-in-law's death, of which he must necessarily have been aware. The prefect was seized and led in chains before a tribunal of generals organized to try the prisoner who was accused by the army. Among the judges was a young general named Diocles, who as commander of the bodyguard must have known what was taking place in his imperial master's tent. Selected by his associates to preside, he permitted no time to be wasted in proving what every one believed. First volunteering an oath that he himself neither was concerned in the murder nor desired imperial honors, Diocles then turned to Aper and shouting in a loud voice, "This man is the assassin," sheathed his sword in the prefect's breast. How like a modern murder trial—this "justice of Diocletian!" And yet perhaps in the long run quite as much real justice and not less mercy than results in some of these later-day *causes célèbres*.

Carinus in the meanwhile had been playing the parts of Domitian and Elagabalus at Rome, which was now longing for a deliverer. The elder son of Carus had ingratiated himself with the populace by declaring that the wealth of the aristocracy belonged to them as being the true Roman people. Fifteen hundred years later this doctrine bore bloody fruit in France; but in the third century of the Empire it was naturally very shocking to the Conscript Fathers, by whom its author was accordingly detested quite as much as he was hated by the soldiers on account of his cruelty and despised by the best citizens because of his sensuality. But for all his love of pleasure, Carinus was

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a good fighter and had won some notable victories over the barbarians during the year of his father's campaign in the East. At his back were the tried legions of Italy and the West, before whom the Asiatic army had rarely been able to stand. So that when Diocles came marching over from the East with all his forces, his task proved anything but easy. Carinus was successful in some preliminary skirmishes along the Danube and in southern Germany, and finally won a decisive battle over his Eastern competitor at Margus in Upper Moesia. But the force of events was against the profligate son of Carus, and in the hour of victory he was murdered by one of his own officers whom the Emperor had greatly wronged—the assassin having the hearty support of the soldiers of Italy, who hailed the defeated conqueror as the deliverer of Rome. Carinus had reigned only a month longer than his father.

DIOCLETIAN—MAXIMIAN: 285–305 A. D. Marcus Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, as his name appears in the inscriptions, was only thirty-nine years of age at the time of his accession. His parents had been slaves in the house of a Roman senator, and it was from the obscure Dalmatian village of Dioclea from whence his mother came, that he acquired his original name of Docles, which he himself “first lengthened to the Grecian harmony of Diocles, and afterwards to the Roman majesty of Diocletianus.”

Entering the service at an early age, Diocletian had won the rapid advancement which in those stormy days was the sure reward of personal courage and ability, having passed through all the higher grades in the army at the time he was selected to assume the purple which had fallen from the murdered son of Carus. And now from this offspring of the lowest class in Roman society, the spirit of the gov-

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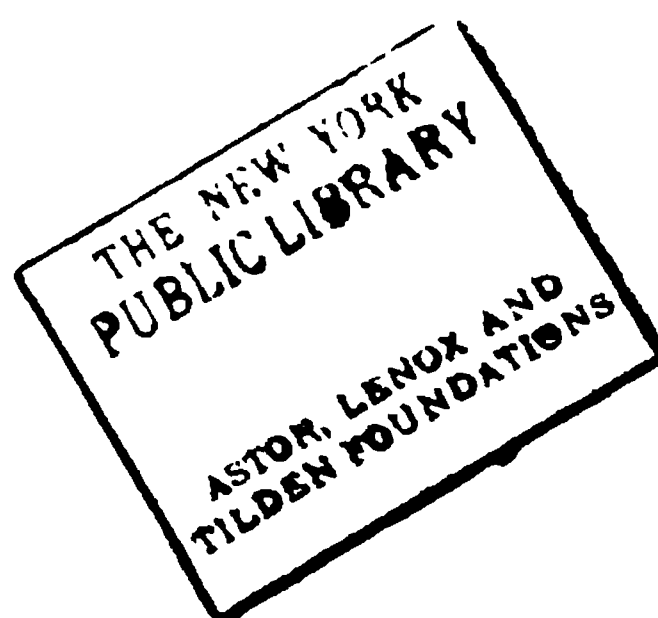
ernment was to receive as profound an impression as that which had been created by the imperial institutions of the first Augustus, whose fundamental idea of military despotism, after enduring three centuries, at last gave way to the Diocletian idea of military partition.

Since the death of Gallienus, who had come perilously near destroying the inheritance of Augustus, it had been the Empire's good fortune to enjoy a succession of able military chiefs as its rulers. But even the matchless courage, ability, and energy of Claudius, Aurelian, and Probus had sufficed merely to keep in momentary check the countless foes of the State, whose aggressiveness gradually revived as the warlike spirit tapered off under Carus, Carinus, and Numerianus. The new Emperor, while a man of great native ability both as a soldier and statesman, was lacking in those extraordinary gifts of military and administrative energy which had enabled his two great predecessors to cope single-handed with all the swarming enemies of the State and at the same time maintain a firm control of its internal affairs. But he possessed in a high measure one great gift of all really great men,—a perfect self-mastery based upon a thorough self-knowledge. Thus wisely appreciating that the task was beyond his single power, he conceived the idea of organizing a vigorous defensive by a division of the power and consequent sharing of the responsibilities which attached to the imperial office. Selecting first an associate who was proclaimed Augustus with authority equalling his own, each of the Augusti then chose for himself an assistant (and future successor), who was proclaimed Cæsar, with the tribunitian power and the military imperium;¹ whereupon the

¹ See Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* for a dissertation on the office of Cæsar, under the system of Diocletian.

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MAXIMIN



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Empire was apportioned among the four, who ruled—or at least were supposed to rule—"all for one and one for all."

Such, in brief, was the so-called system of Diocletian, as it was finally perfected. But at the outset its founder perhaps contemplated only a division of the Empire into halves, which, based upon natural and geographical lines, would become Greek in the East and Latin in the West. At any rate, it was only after Maximian and himself had struggled seven weary years in defence of the State that Diocletian saw fit to complete his political system by creating the two additional subdivisions and their rulers. From which it is not unreasonable to conclude that the "system" was stretched to meet the increasing dangers of the State.

Maximian, who became the Emperor's first colleague, was peasant-born, a native of Sirmium, which, having already supplied the Empire with two rulers, was now to present it with two more. Maximian was a good soldier, but outside of his fighting power was without ability, being utterly ignorant of letters and in appearance and manners always displaying the meanness of his birth and coarseness of his nature. He was not even a great general, his victories proceeding rather from brute force and courage than military strategy and dispositions. Rough and brutal as he was, he never failed to recognize the superiority of his imperial patron, who held him in easy check as long as he himself remained at the helm. Of the two Cæsars, Galerius, who had commenced life as a herdsman, was a native of the same territory as Maximian, whom he so much resembled in character and manners that he was not infrequently spoken of as the younger Maximian. The other assistant, Flavius Constantius, surnamed Chlorus

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ished throughout the Empire, Constantius alone protecting them to some extent in Gaul.

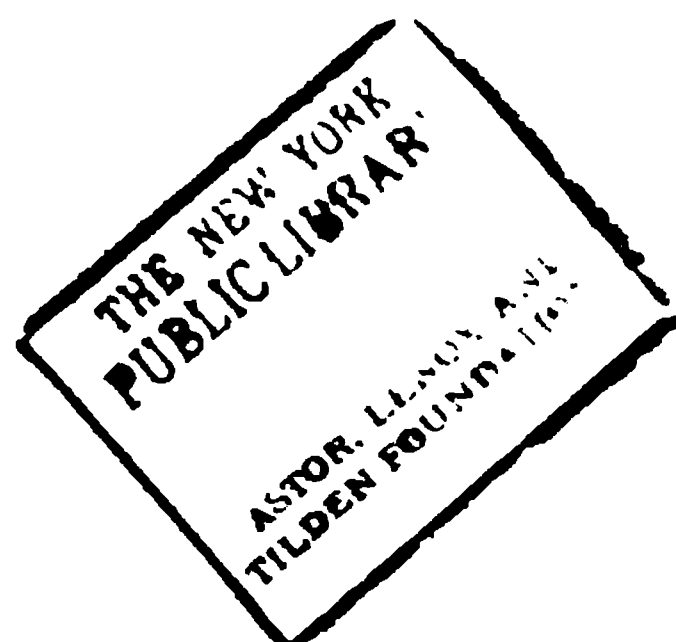
At the time Maximian was elevated to the purple, it had been stipulated that he should abdicate whenever Diocletian should do so. The great Roman triumph and the persecution of the Christians occurred in the twentieth year of their reign, and at the end of that year Diocletian decided that the time had come to lay aside the purple. His strength, he said, was decreasing and repose was needful after so many labors. On the first of May, 305, Maximian¹ at Milan proclaimed as Cæsar one of his generals named Severus, while on the same day at Nikomedeia the senior Augustus laid his mantle upon a nephew of Galerius named Maximin Daza, and "Diocles" once more, he quitted the scene of his power forever. Upon the Dalmatian coast on the Adriatic, he had prepared a magnificent palace, covering a space of more than eight acres.² Here the old Emperor lived in seclusion for a period of eight or nine years. His life was embittered towards the end by the sufferings and death of his wife and daughter at the hands of his successors;³ other than which he lived in comparative peace and happiness. To an appeal of his former colleague Maximian that he should reassume the purple, he philosophically replied, "If you could see the cabbages I am raising, you would not ask me to abandon my happiness for the pursuit of power!" Sensibly persisting in his retirement, he died peacefully in his bed in the sixty-ninth year of his age, and was decreed an apotheosis by direction of Constantine, who speaks of him as "our lord and father";

¹ For the future life and death of Maximian, see *post*, pages 317 to 320.

² The site of this palace is now occupied by the little town of Spalato, which was largely erected from the materials of its forerunner.

³ See *post*, page 324.

GORDIAN 1



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

while an inscription of the time calls him "the father of the Emperors." All this was very distasteful to the Christians, by whom were circulated various reports that the Emperor, after a wretched old age, died by either poison or voluntary starvation, and that his statues were overthrown and his memory execrated by Constantine; all of these misfortunes, including the miseries of the Empress Prisca and her daughter, being of course attributed to the divine retribution.

Twelve centuries later the vengeance of the oppressed Christians worked itself out in a more poetical way. At Rome the name of Diocletian will always be associated with the magnificent Thermæ,¹ which were completed in the year of his abdication, tradition ascribing the execution of the work to condemned Christians. From the windows of a great modern hotel, with all of its twentieth-century luxuries, one looks out to-day upon the low, quaint entrance to the Church of S. Maria degli Angeli, the Tepidarium of seventeen centuries ago, which about the year 1560 was converted into a Carthusian convent by Pope Pius IV at the hands of Michael Angelo.²

DIOCLETIAN TO CONSTANTINE: 305-324 A. D. During the twenty years which immediately followed the abdication of Diocletian, Rome was under the sway of eight Emperors, not one of whom was momentarily supreme; while on two occasions no less than six men were both exercising imperial functions and acknowledged throughout the

¹ The Baths of Diocletian are said to have been twice as large in circumference as those of Caracalla. See *ante*, page 255, Note 2.

² The church was consecrated August 5, 1561. Most of the remaining parts of the Thermæ are preserved and occupied for charitable, religious, and educational purposes.

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State as Augusti. Pretenders were also flourishing in different parts of the Roman world, so that for a while conditions resembled somewhat those which obtained during the reign of Gallienus and the Thirty Tyrants. But the inevitable jealousies and clashings incident to such a division of power gradually cleared the way for a consolidation of the Empire under the strong arm and master mind of Constantine, who emerged at last as the sole survivor of this double decade of imperial contention and strife, in which, with the exception of his father Constantius, all of his seven competitors miserably perished. The eight Emperors who bridged the period from Diocletian to Constantine were as follows:

CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS: proclaimed 305, died 306.

GALERIUS: proclaimed 305, died 311.

MAXIMIN DAZA: proclaimed 305, died 313.

SEVERUS: proclaimed 305, died 307.

CONSTANTINE: proclaimed 306, became sole Emperor 324.

MAXENTIUS: proclaimed 306, died 312.

MAXIMIAN: proclaimed (the second time) 306, died 310.

LICINIUS: proclaimed 307, died 324.

When Diocletian and Maximian laid aside the purple, Constantius remained in charge of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, which had been his from the beginning, Galerius likewise retaining his Danubian provinces, to which were added a large part of eastern Europe formerly controlled by Diocletian; while of the new Cæsars, Maximin received Egypt and Syria, Severus Africa and Italy. At Nikomedeia with Galerius was a handsome vigorous youth, who had been held by Diocletian as a sort of hostage. He was a son of Constantius, who had frequently begged the former Emperor that the young man might be allowed to join

REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

him in the West; to all which entreaties Diocletian had invariably turned a deaf ear. Constantius was now in feeble health, and in response to his urgent appeal the young Constantine by a bold stratagem escaped from Galerius and made his way by forced marches to Gaul. Constantius was barely able to muster enough strength to accompany him to Britain, where father and son were received by the army with acclamations. The Emperor did not long survive this journey, and a few days after his death,¹ in the city of York (Eboracum), Constantine was proclaimed Augustus by his father's devoted legions.

The idea of hereditary succession was directly opposed to the principles of Diocletian's system; and the senior Augustus—having no sons of his own—was at first greatly enraged by the news from Britain. But the offenders were too far away—and too powerful; so that Galerius finally accepted the situation, merely relegating Constantine from the rank of Augustus to the fourth place; Severus being raised to the second place, with the title of Augustus, Maximin remaining the first Cæsar. Constantine had the good sense to acquiesce, and for a while everything moved smoothly, under the reëstablished tetrarchy. But a storm was brewing at Rome—out of patience with a set of rulers who seemed to scorn the Imperial City, which, shorn of its importance, its authority, and its grandeur, was already fast becoming merely a stopping-place in the journeys from one provincial palace to another. Rome clamored for an Emperor of its own and found one ready made at hand in the person of Maxentius, the son of the old Emperor Maximian, and the son-in-law of Galerius. Under cover of an obnoxious tax measure, a riot broke out, Maxentius was proclaimed Augustus, and Maximian, recalled from his

¹ In July, 306.

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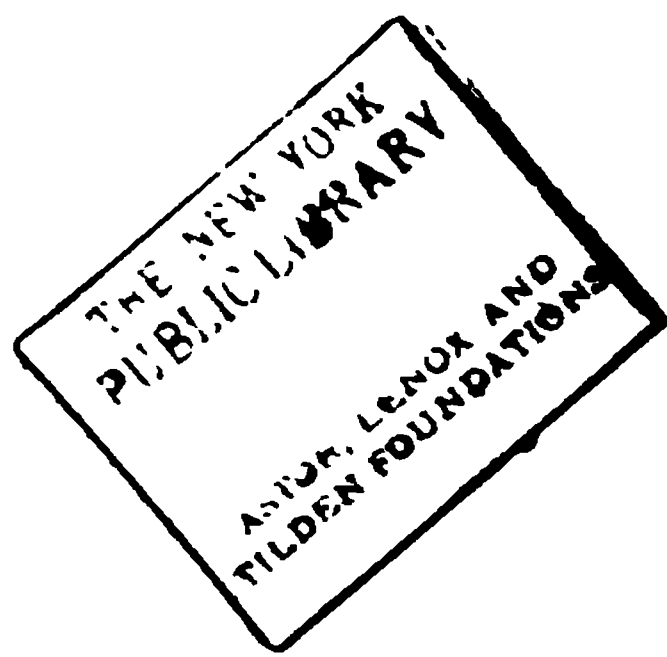
retirement, was also persuaded to accept the purple from the Senate, the people, and the soldiers. So that now there were six Emperors instead of four, and Rome went wild with joy—a sure earnest of sorrows to come.

Italy was supposed to be under the special direction of Severus, who was accordingly at once instructed by Galerius to put down the Roman usurpers. He arrived before the Imperial City with a large army; but before a blow was struck the troops went over to Maxentius in a body, Severus barely escaping to Ravenna, from whence he soon surrendered to Maxentius. He was taken to Rome, and there imprisoned in a villa on the Appian Way; and after having been induced to resign the purple (which ought never to have been bestowed upon him) by Maxentius, who promised solemnly that his life should be spared, the hapless prisoner was ordered to commit suicide, which he did by opening his veins.

Maxentius and his father were now masters of Italy, and the situation was serious enough to compel the personal attention of Galerius. He came down from Illyria with a powerful army and forced his way to within sixty miles of Rome—the nearest he had ever been to his Imperial City. But his adversaries were active and had the united support of the Italian troops and people, to whom this unknown Eastern Emperor was merely an invader. So that in the end Galerius, fearful that Constantine, in league with the Roman Augusti, might attempt to intercept his retreat, abandoned his attempt and retired in hot haste, burning and ravaging the Italian provinces as he went.

Upon setting out to chastise the Roman usurpers the Eastern Augustus had intrusted to his friend Licinius the defence of the Danube. Licinius had been an old comrade in arms of Galerius, and like the Emperor was the son

GORDIAN II



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of a peasant, although he claimed to be descended from the Emperor Philip. He had long been destined to succeed Galerius, and immediately upon the latter's return from the unsuccessful Italian expedition, Licinius was proclaimed Augustus and received Illyria as his share of the government. The Empire was now divided into two great hostile powers; Maximian, his son Maxentius, and his son-in-law Constantine controlling the West, while Galerius, his nephew Maximin, and his comrade Licinius ruled the East. The system of Diocletian was utterly destroyed, and with it had vanished all semblance of harmony in the Empire. While the two great forces of which Constantine and Galerius were the exponents were contending for supremacy, the various elements in each were struggling among themselves. Scarcely had Galerius withdrawn from Italy, thereby practically sanctioning the Roman Augusti, before Maximian and his son had a serious quarrel; and the fiery old man, deprived of what he considered his due share of power, betook himself to the Court of Constantine. Soon after his arrival he formally resigned the purple; and having thus disarmed possible suspicion, he commenced to plot the overthrow of his son-in-law. Taking advantage of the latter's absence in repulsing an invasion of the Franks, he seized and distributed among the soldiers the imperial treasure, and having spread a false report of Constantine's death, caused himself to be once more proclaimed Augustus. But Constantine, returning by forced marches from the Rhine, drove his traitorous father-in-law into Marseilles and was preparing to carry the city by assault when the gates were opened and the usurper given up by the soldiers. Deprived of his imperial honors, Maximian lived a while in seeming humility at the Court of his son-in-law, but finally tempted Fate once more by engaging in a fresh

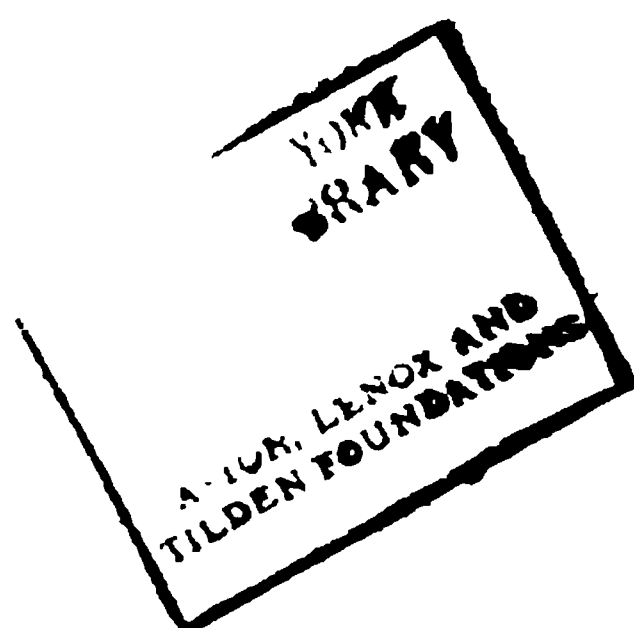
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR .

plot. The forbearance of Constantine was exhausted, Maximian was condemned to be executed, but allowed, like Severus, to choose the instrument of his death; and in the year 310 the turbulent spirit of the old warrior, who had enjoyed the unique distinction of having been three times invested with the purple, was forever stilled by the customary method of self-destruction.

After the unsuccessful attempt to destroy the Roman Augusti, Galerius seems to have given up his former projects for universal Empire, and relying upon Licinius as a bulwark against the possible ambitions of Maxentius, the elder Augustus devoted himself to a life of pleasure in his Eastern city of Nikomedeia. He survived Maximian barely a year, and a month before his death performed the best act of his reign,—the issuance of an edict of toleration, thus ending the era of the martyrs which Diocletian and himself had inaugurated. His death was occasioned by a terrible disease, the repulsive details of which are related by the ancient writers with undisguised pleasure. To the persecuted Christians it was the divine retribution—untempered by the tyrant's display of eleventh-hour mercy.

The dominions of Galerius were shared between Maximin and Licinius, Asia falling to the former, who already had the far East, while Licinius acquired the European provinces. But the crafty and far-sighted Constantine, who now began to see his opening, took advantage of the opportunity to break up the old combination of forces, by forming a secret alliance with Licinius; whereupon Maxentius in Italy and Maximin in Syria threw in their lots together. It was once more a tetrarchy, but lacking in that essential cohesiveness which could result only from harmony among the rulers held in check by one master mind, as in the case of Diocletian's government.

BALBINUS



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

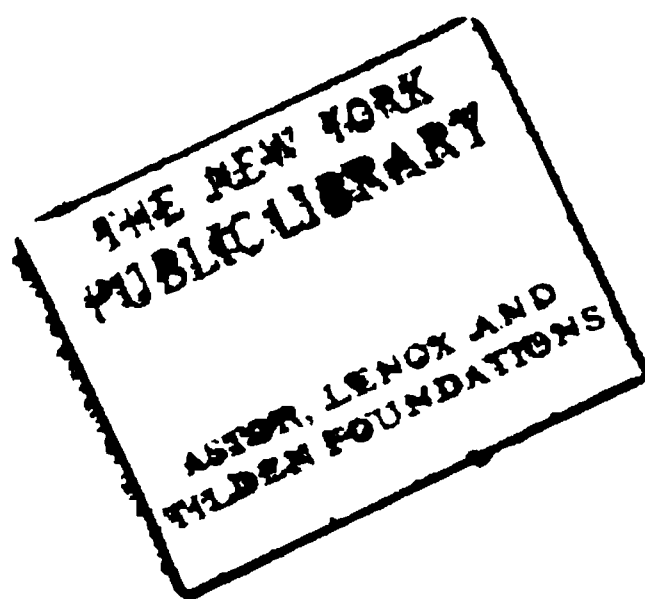
During the greater part of the time which had elapsed since Rome had given way to such unbounded joy upon the acquisition of a resident Augustus in the person of Maxentius, that Emperor had conducted himself in a way to arouse the bitterest hostility and detestation of his subjects. By nature cruel, rapacious, and licentious, it needed only the defeat of Severus and the banishment of Maximian to bring into action all the vicious instincts which until his power had become thus firmly established Maxentius had wisely kept in check. In the abominable pursuits to which his life was thereafter abandoned, he displayed himself a veritable tyrant. The noblest Romans were robbed of their goods, despoiled of their wives and daughters, and deprived of their lives at the whim of the dissolute and evil-minded young ruler, who had protected himself from their resentment by filling the city with armed troops whose devotion was secured both by immense largesses and immunity to plunder and massacre the defenceless people. No wonder an appeal went out to Constantine to relieve Italy of this incarnated Domitian.

The self-poised Gallic Emperor at first refused to interfere; but when Maxentius, affecting a filial anger at the death of the father he had himself driven away, destroyed the statues of Constantine, erased his titles from the public monuments, and announced his intention of invading Gaul and possessing himself of the Western Empire, the son of Chlorus knew that the hour which he had been awaiting had struck. Disregarding the timid counsels of his generals, Constantine selected from his total available forces of one hundred thousand men, about forty thousand of his best-seasoned troops; and leaving the remainder to guard the Rhine, he crossed the Alps by way of Mont Cenis so expeditiously that his little army was deployed

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

ing more difficult. Maximin had captured Byzantium and penetrated as far as Adrianople, where he was confronted by Licinius with an army of thirty thousand men. The Eastern Emperor had more than twice that number, and for a time Licinius did not venture to test the issue. He was, however, a skilful soldier, and his legions had been well hardened and disciplined in the continuous border warfare. A battle finally took place, in which the Syrian forces were completely overthrown, their leader escaping to Tarsus, where he soon perished by that so-called "divine justice" which the profane mind accounted for through the medium of poison. The whole East accepted his defeat with complacency, Maximin as to ability and virtue having proved a rather more than faint echo of Maxentius. Licinius celebrated his victory by an act which could have been based alone upon a determination to extirpate every individual who might thereafter advance hereditary pretensions to his power. Having first destroyed the two children of Maximin, a boy of eight and a girl of seven, he next put to death Severianus, the harmless son of the deceased Emperor Severus (whose death had made room for the elevation of Licinius), Candidianus, the natural son of his friend and benefactor Galerius, and finally—the most shameful act of all—the virtuous and unhappy Valeria, widow of Galerius, and her aged mother Prisca, who were ruthlessly beheaded in Thessalonica. Prisca was the wife and Valeria the daughter of Diocletian, and before the ashes of Galerius were fairly cold, the brutal Maximin, whose wife was still alive, coveting the possession and charms of the widowed Empress, endeavored to force her into a marriage with himself. Upon her dignified refusal, the tyrant had confiscated her estates and condemned the Empress and her mother to exile. The old

DECIUS



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

Emperor Diocletian pleaded in vain that his wife and daughter might be permitted to minister to his declining years at his retreat in Salona; Maximin had been obdurate, and his conqueror indicating if anything still greater inhumanity, the wife and daughter of Diocletian escaped in disguise from their former asylum in exile, only to perish miserably after fifteen months' hiding in the utmost wretchedness and privation.

The tetrarchy of Diocletian had thus finally been replaced by a dyarchy, in which Constantine controlled Italy, Africa, and all of the West, while the remainder of the Empire was subject to Licinius. It is true that the title of Cæsar was conferred by Constantine upon Bassianus, who had married the Emperor's sister Anastasia; while Valens, the Illyrian general of Licinius, was by the latter raised to the same rank. But in the war which speedily ensued between the rival Augusti, these unimportant Cæsars were speedily ~~stripped~~ ^{deprived} of both title and power, which Constantine then plainly determined should ultimately be possessed by himself alone. After two bloody battles had been fought—one in Pannonia, the other in Thrace—between the Augusti, in each of which Constantine was victorious, although Licinius was not absolutely conquered, a peace was patched up between the contestants, Licinius remaining in possession of Thrace, Egypt, and the East, while Constantine added to his former possessions all of the European provinces between Italy and the extremity of Peloponnesus. With this accretion of dignity and power the conqueror contented himself for eight years, during which the Roman world enjoyed internal peace. But after his great victories over the Goths and other northern barbarians, Constantine “in his exalted state of glory found it impossible to longer endure a part-

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ner in the Empire"; and assembling a formidable army, he marched for the last time against his associate. The old Emperor, notwithstanding his effeminate life in the East, was still warlike, and the contest was long in doubt. Constantine won the memorable battle of Adrianople, in which three hundred thousand combatants were engaged; but Licinius immediately shut himself up in Byzantium, which was able for a long time to withstand all the efforts of the conqueror. Before the city fell, Licinius escaped into Bithynia, where he organized a new army of sixty thousand men; and it was only after the decisive battle of Chrysopolis, in which more than half of his troops perished, that the sturdy old soldier could be persuaded that the candle was burned out. It is said that his wife Constantia played the part of Octavia in the negotiations between her vanquished husband and the victorious Augustus. After resigning the purple, and accepting his pardon from Constantine, Licinius was sent into confinement in Thessalonica, where he soon passed away among the shadows which so commonly settled down upon the dethroned rulers of the Roman world—once more united after thirty-seven years of divided power under a leader whose memorable accomplishments have conferred upon him the appellation of Constantine the Great.

CONSTANTINE: 306–324–337 A. D. Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus was born about the year 273, on the day that his father under the Emperor Aurelian gained a great victory over the Alemanni. His father, Constantius Chlorus, a nephew of the Emperor Claudius,¹ had married Flavia Julia Helena, the daughter of an innkeeper of unknown nationality, who became the mother of Constan-

¹ *Ante*, page 312.

REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

tine, all of whose successors in the fourth century took his gentile name of Flavius. Although compelled to submit to a divorce from her husband upon his elevation to the rank of Cæsar,¹ Helena lived to see her own son become the sole ruler of the Empire and to be herself saluted as Augusta by the soldiers. The mother of Constantine was a zealous Christian, and on the occasion of her pious pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the year 327, was accredited with the discovery of the holy sepulchre and the true cross, which in later years won for her the honor of a canonization.

Constantine was probably born at Naïssus,² in Dacia, and during his youth and early manhood concerned himself more about the pursuit of arms than the acquisition of knowledge. At the time of his mother's divorce he was eighteen years of age, and instead of allowing him to remain in the service with his father and thus naturally acquire hopes of future power, Diocletian, whose policy forbade the idea of hereditary succession, took the young man with him to the East, where he served with distinction in the Persian wars and finally attained the office of tribune. He remained with Diocletian, practically as a hostage, until the abdication; soon after which, having escaped from Nikomedeia, where Galerius had assumed control, he rejoined his father, and after the latter's death gradually worked his way up to supreme power, as previously related.³

Constantine is represented as having been tall and handsome, skilled in all manly exercises, affable in manners,

¹ Helena is by some thought to have been united to Constantius by a marriage of the second order only; as to which see *ante*, page 238, Note 1.

² The legend that Constantine was born in Britain has been abandoned.

³ *Ante*, pages 316 to 326.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

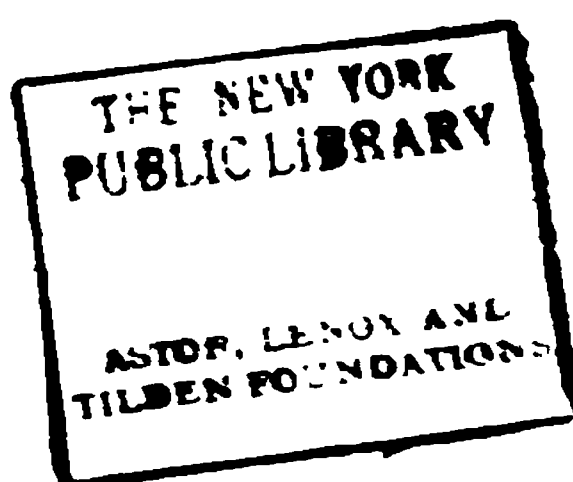
and of a kindly disposition when not opposed. Possessed of high ambition and a masterful will, he was not over-scrupulous in the attainment of his ends; and although apparently free from cruel and revengeful instincts, he never hesitated to sweep out of his path every one—man, woman, or child—who impeded or in the slightest degree threatened his progress. The unvarying patience and self-control manifested by him during all the years of his associated reign proves that he had early mastered the grand philosophy of life by learning to wait. But the successive steps in his march to absolute power also demonstrate that when the time for action had unmistakably arrived, not even the great Cæsar was more prompt and vigorous in striking.

Constantine was an intrepid soldier and an able general, but unlike all his predecessors in the purple who had been great military leaders, he achieved no important victory outside of the civil wars. His magnificent triumphal arch between the Colosseum and the Palatine, the best-preserved monument of its kind in Rome,¹ was erected, not after any victory over a foreign foe, but in commemoration of the defeat of Maxentius, at Saxa Rubra, and of his final disbandment of the prætorians—acts, however, for which the long-suffering Romans might with genuine reason accord a triumph to their liberator.

The foundation of a New Rome on the Bosphorus and his religious policy were Constantine's most important contributions to universal history. In the establishment of

¹ Roman art was at so low an ebb in the fourth century that in default of competent sculptors the Arch of Constantine was embellished with ornaments ruthlessly torn from a monument of Trajan, whose head in marble can still be discerned amidst the rude and unskilful decorations of Constantine's builders.

GALLUS



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

Constantinople as the imperial centre of a government which had legalized Christianity, the ultimate triumph of Eastern barbarism was retarded ten centuries ; while Rome, thus finally and formally discarded by her temporal rulers, became the natural heritage of the pontifical authority. Of course neither of these results was intended by Constantine, who, in creating a Nova Roma, was actuated purely by a desire to mark in a visible and concrete form the glory of his personal achievements and at the same time establish for himself a fitting home far from the polluted atmosphere of despised Rome. The great city which he founded, after playing a most important part in the history of civilization and again and again becoming the key to European diplomacy, has retained nothing but the name of the first Christian Emperor, whose sarcophagus even has been removed to the city he had scorned and abandoned—that pagan city which in the end surviving all assaults, became the living centre of the Christian world.

Concerning the nature of the great Constantine's relation to Christianity volumes have been written—it being perhaps the most hotly disputed subject of any connected with the lives of the Roman Emperors. But, after all, the historically significant fact is not his personal acceptance or rejection of Christianity, but that he endowed it with worldly power sufficient for its development into "the strongest social and political agent that affects the destinies of the human race." Viewed in this light, it is largely immaterial whether we are to believe the story of Eusebius that Constantine was converted while on the march to meet Maxentius by the apparition of a luminous cross, or the relation of the pagan authors Libanius and Zosimus, who respectively date the conversion after the defeat of Licinius (323) and after the death of Crispus (326). The

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

facts are that although doubtless imbibing his father's inclinations towards the new religion, statesman as he was he had from the beginning treated the question as one of statesmanship. It is therefore occasion for no surprise that side by side with his decrees in favor of Christianity were others in favor of the gods, that throughout his reign new temples were built, as well as basilicas, and that pagan as well as Christian observances received the imperial sanction. In all these acts we see the wisdom of the great ruler, devoting himself to the lofty aim of compelling men to live in peace, and trusting to time and habit to efface radical differences of a kind which can never be destroyed by arbitrary decree. As Stanley remarked, Constantine was entitled to be called Great in virtue of what he did, rather than what he was. Whether he was actually a convert to Christianity as early as 313 is perhaps uncertain, but we do know that in that year he promulgated the Edict of Milan; which has been called the grandest legislative act in all history,—a declaration of the equality of all cults and the establishment of complete liberty for religious observances. The Christian Church doubtless accords him a higher place because of the Council of Nice, which he summoned and whose conclusions he adopted. The formulation of a credo was, to be sure, a high necessity for the Church in the face of the first great heresy with which it had been confronted. But infinitely grander, to the student of human greatness, is the solemn declaration over the signature of an Emperor bearing the pagan title of Pontifex Maximus, that Christian believers should enjoy peace and tranquillity equally with the worshippers of the old gods.

Although the marriage of the first Constantius with Theodora had resulted in six children, of whom three were

REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

sons (who were thus of imperial descent on both sides), the father seems never to have hesitated in according the right of succession to the child of his earlier marriage. The dying Emperor nevertheless solemnly commended his other children to the protection and care of Constantine, and with a single exception¹ the latter proved faithful to the trust, Theodora's children receiving constant proofs of their imperial brother's affection. He married Constantia to the Emperor Licinius, and the other two sisters received husbands of the highest rank. Of the three brothers, one died without a name or posterity; the other two married daughters of wealthy senators, and the son of one of them attained the purple after the last descendant of Constantine had perished.

Constantine himself was twice married. His first matrimonial relations, however, were of the *conjugium inaequale* order; and the fact that Minervina was still living did not therefore stand for a moment in the way of his second marriage to Fausta, daughter of the Emperor Maximian, a connection which promised to materially advance his interests. By his first wife he had a son named Crispus, who was about six years old when Constantine became Cæsar. Crispus himself received the title some fifteen years later and proved a useful auxiliary to his father by winning some considerable victories over the Franks and Alemanni. In time, however, factions were formed about Crispus on the one side, and his half-brothers on the other; and the

¹ This was the murder of the only son of Constantia and Licinius. After the latter's overthrow, the young Licinianus was for a time spared through the entreaties of his mother. When he had attained the age of twelve years, however, the Emperor imagined that his nephew had become a dangerous element, and notwithstanding the tears and supplications of his widowed sister, Constantine ordered the boy's death.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

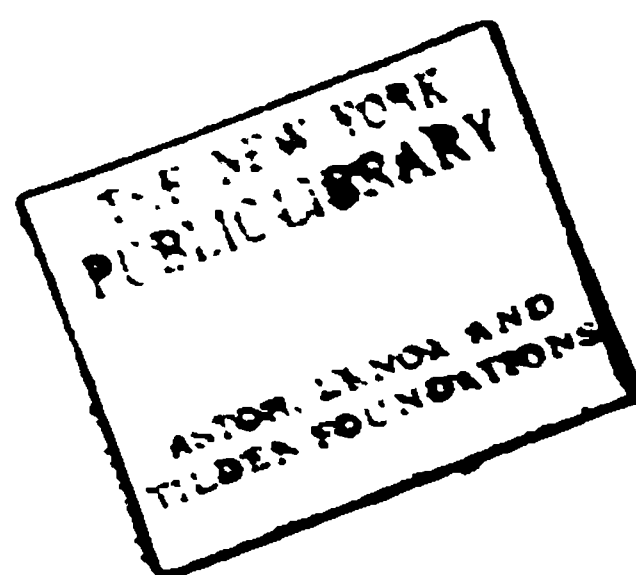
former, accused of a conspiracy against his father, was imprisoned by the Emperor. The unhappy youth, who is said to have been highly amiable, soon perished by his father's commands. Constantine had already put to death his father-in-law, the old mischief-maker Maximian; his wife's nephews, the two sons of Maxentius (whom he had killed in battle); Bassianus, who had married his sister Anastasia; the Emperor Licinius, husband to his sister Constantia, and the latter's young son Licinianus—all "for the good of the State."¹ It remained only to round out this family tragedy by a still grosser domestic crime—to which history declares he was incited by "Saint" Helena herself. The aged mother of the Emperor had been greatly attached to Crispus, and enraged by his murder, which she perhaps rightly attributed to the jealous dislike of Fausta, by whom Crispus had been accused of meditating parricide (or a worse crime, according to some historians), she seems to have persuaded her son that the Empress had been guilty of "abominable machinations." Under her husband's orders Fausta was thereupon seized by her women and stifled in a hot bath, and her name was effaced from the public edifices.²

The murder of his wife and son marked the culmination of Constantine's prosperity; indeed, with the exception of the foundation of Constantinople, the period of eleven years during which his life was prolonged after the death of Fausta was barren of important events. Since his tri-

¹ ~~Constantine~~ ~~deserves~~ ~~no~~ ~~pity~~, having conspired with Licinius, his father-in-law, who had given him his sister in marriage to the rank of Cæsar.

² ~~Constantine~~ expressed in regard to this story, but the weight of authority does not confirm it. The Church of St. John Lateran occupies the site of her palace, which after her death was bestowed by Constantine to the Bishops of Rome.

GALLIENUS



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

umphal entry into the city after the overthrow of Maxentius, the Emperor had visited Rome only to celebrate the solemn festivals of the tenth and twentieth years of his reign. It was during the *vicennalia* celebration¹ that the deaths of Fausta and Crispus occurred; and the Romans, by whom Constantine was disliked both on account of his studied absences from the ancient city and the favor which he had shown the Christians, taunted him with the murder of Fausta, declaring that "Nero had come back to Rome."² Satirical verses were affixed to the palace gates, and the crowds indulged openly in sarcasms and insolence, while the Emperor, upon the Palatine, was himself contemptuously watching a celebration by the knights of the ancient rite of offering to Jupiter the prayers of the Roman youths. Deeply incensed at this treatment, Constantine determined to turn his back upon Rome forever. Milan, Trèves, Sirmium, and other provincial cities had been the occasional places of his residence, but he now set his face squarely towards the East, and the town of Byzantium was finally selected as the site of a new capital.

Constantine spent immense sums in building and beautifying his imperial city, for the adornment of which Rome, Athens, and the East were despoiled of their sculptures. The Emperor never again visited his ancient city on the Tiber. After devoting four years to the building of Constantinople,³ he spent the last seven years of his life in making a few good laws and indulging in some desultory wars with the Goths, but in the main "reposing to all

¹ The twentieth anniversary of his accession.

² The death of Fausta had been accomplished by a similar method to that adopted by Nero in ridding himself of Octavia. See *ante*, page 151.

³ The old Byzantium was not destroyed by Constantine, whose edifices were built in the new quarters of the city.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

eternity on the bosom of Indolence.”¹ In the year 337, which was the thirty-first of his reign, a war broke out with Rome’s traditional foe, the Persians, under a new Sapor. The Emperor left Constantinople at the head of his army; but death was upon him, and at Diocletian’s old city of Nikomedeia the end came. Just at the last he was baptized by the Arian Bishop Eusebius, and it was therefore said that he died a Christian. It certainly cannot be averred with any degree of truth that he had lived like one. His body was conveyed to the city he had founded and there interred near that of his mother in a magnificent tomb of porphyry in the Church of the Holy Apostles which he had built. He had lived sixty-three years, during one-half of which he wore the purple—thus marking the longest reign of any Emperor since Augustus.

THE SONS OF CONSTANTINE: 337–361 A. D. It was Constantine’s intention that his three sons should share the Empire—with the exception of Pontus, and of Thrace, Achaia, and Macedon, which the Emperor had converted into separate kingdoms for his respective nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus.² At the time of their father’s death Constantine II was twenty-two, Constantius II twenty, and Constans seventeen. The elder brothers had become intensely jealous of their relatives of the half-blood, and in disregard of their father’s wishes determined to secure for themselves the entire inheritance, beyond the possibility of reclaim. The funeral of Constantine had occurred in June; and early in September following Constantius, who appears to have been the family plotter, having enticed his uncles and cousins to Constantinople under a

¹ Julian in the *Cæsars*.

² They were the sons of his second half-brother Hannibalianus.

REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

solemn pledge of safety, incited the soldiers to a wholesale massacre of the Flavians. Constantine's two surviving brothers and seven of his nine nephews perished on the same day; the only male descendants of the first Constantius (other than Constantine's own sons) who escaped were the two youngest sons of Julius Constantius (the youngest son of Chlorus), Gallus, aged twelve, and his half-brother Julian, a boy of six. Immediately after this great family murder, the three brothers were proclaimed Augusti under the imperial division which their father had indicated: Constantine II taking the West; Italy, Africa, and Illyria falling to Constans; while Constantius II, who had engineered the crime, added to his original share of the Eastern provinces the kingdoms of Thrace and Pontus, whose rulers were among the slain.

This "family affair," as D'Artagnan and his friends would have termed it, was commemorated by the erection of statues inscribed "To the brothers who love each other"; but the sentiment, if it ever existed, was of short duration. Scarcely two years elapsed before Constantine, in emulation of his father, crossed the Alps with the intention of appropriating Italy and incidentally of pushing his youngest brother into the Adriatic. Successful in his first operations, still following in the footsteps of the great Constantine, but lacking his ability and military experience, he turned to the north and rashly attempted the capture of Aquileia, which was defended by a strong force under an able general. Constantine was defeated and killed; so that it was his body which upon the currents of the river Elsa was finally cast into the Adriatic, while his provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Britain reverted to his intended victim.

Constantius was too deeply engaged in a desperate struggle with the Persians to oppose this aggrandizement of his

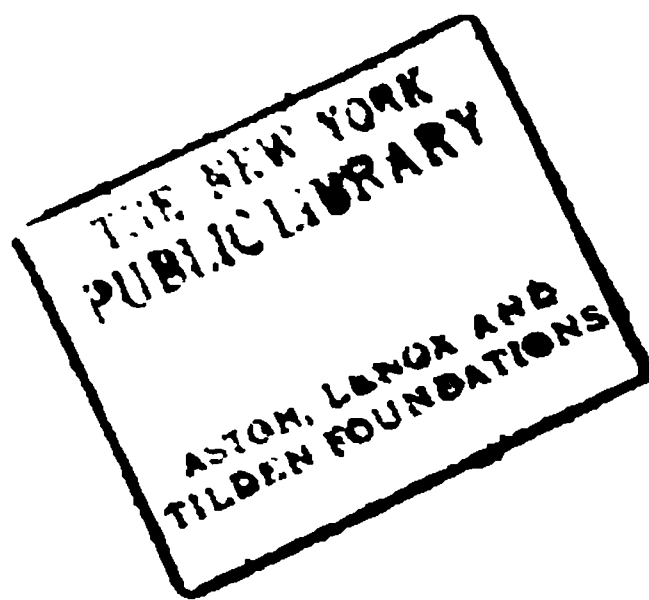
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

younger brother, who thus became master of two-thirds of the Roman world, a dignity which he retained thirteen years. Little is known of the reign of Constans, who has been variously represented by the ancient writers as a saint and a tyrant, a lazy profligate and a successful campaigner. But he seems to have at last thoroughly disgusted his subjects; for when in the year 350 a rough Gallic soldier of German extraction, named Magnentius, during a drinking bout of the guards donned the purple robe in a spirit of bravado, the soldiers received him with a cheer, while not a voice was raised in favor of the Emperor. When the news reached Constans, who was hunting in a forest near Autun, he fled towards the Pyrenees, but was speedily overtaken by the bloodhounds of the usurper and put to death.

The claims of Magnentius were at first strengthened by an alliance with Vetricio, an Illyrian general who had himself been induced to assume the purple by Constantina, a sister of Constantius II, and the widow of the murdered Hannibalianus, King of Thrace. The usurpers sent an embassy to Constantius, proposing a division of the Empire. The Emperor declined to negotiate, and glad of an excuse to withdraw from the East, where he had been almost invariably worsted by the Persians, came marching into Pannonia, with the avowed purpose of avenging his brother. He soon craftily detached his sister from the cause of Vetricio, who thereupon at once surrendered. Magnentius, however, maintained himself nearly a year. After destroying Nepotianus, a nephew of Constantius, who with his mother, Eutropia, was killed at Rome, which he was endeavoring to hold against the usurper, Magnentius, who did not lack for courage, set out for the Danube in quest of his adversary. It was Constantius who now proposed an accommodation, and Magnentius who refused. The issue

SALONINA WIFE OF GALLIENUS

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REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

was decided in favor of Constantius, who won the bloody battle of Mursa, in which fifty thousand of the best soldiers in the Empire perished. Magnentius fled to Italy, thence escaping to Gaul—only to learn that the Gallic and Italian cities had repudiated his brothers, who had been created Cæsars and left in charge of the West during his absence in Pannonia. One of his brothers had already committed suicide, and Magnentius in a wild fit of rage and despair killed his mother and surviving brother and fell upon his sword. The curtain was rung down to a wholesale slaughter of his friends and partisans ordered by his conqueror.

Constantius II, in whom the imperial power was united for a period of seven years,¹ has come down to us as small in stature and mind, and in character timid, crafty, suspicious, and cruel, but with the redeeming traits of sobriety and a taste for literature. After the death of his first wife, who was his cousin,² Constantius married a lady of consular rank, who is spoken of by Julian as “the good and beautiful Eusebia.” The Emperor, however, had no children, and when the rebellion of Magnentius became formidable, he appointed his cousin Gallus Cæsar with the government of the far East, and gave him his sister Constantina³ in marriage. Gallus, who was now twenty-six years of age, had lived in a state of practical captivity since the murder of the Flavians, fourteen years before. His character was too weak to support this sudden change from a prison to a viceroyalty; and making a complete failure of his charge, he was ordered back to Italy. Upon his arrival he was deprived of his office and after a mock trial beheaded. Constantina had died upon the way.

¹ Magnentius died in 353, and Julian was proclaimed in 360, the year preceding Constantius's death.

² She was sister to Julian. ³ *Ante*, page 335.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

In the meantime Gaul had been completely overrun by an immense horde of Germans, who permanently occupied the left bank of the Rhine; and in default of a trustworthy leader, Constantius, who was in perpetual fear of another Magnentius, was induced by the Empress to appoint his cousin Julian, the last male Flavian, Cæsar and prefect of the Gallic provinces—as in the case of Gallus, at the same time bestowing upon him a sister (named Helena) in marriage.¹ But the notable victories soon won by Julian speedily awakened the jealousy and suspicions of the Emperor, who ordered the Gallic Cæsar to despatch the flower of his army to assist the Emperor in the Persian war which had again broken out. The troops, unwilling to be transported to the deadly sands beyond the Euphrates, openly rebelled; Constantius was publicly execrated, and Julian, strongly against his will, compelled to accept the title of Augustus which the army conferred. Although the Gallic Emperor seems to have honestly endeavored to avoid civil war, it soon became evident that no reconciliation was possible, and both sides prepared for the struggle. Julian first took the offensive by occupying Illyria, while Constantius was still in the far East. The latter at once set out for Europe, but at Tarsus was overtaken by a fever and a few days later died. He was in his forty-fifth year, having reigned a full quarter of a century. Like his father, he was baptized in his last illness.

JULIAN: 361–363 A. D. Measured both by character and accomplishment, and considering the fact that he died before completing his thirty-second year, the last of the Flavian dynasty must be considered as one of the greatest

¹ No children resulted from this marriage, which Helena, much older than Julian, did not long survive.

REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

of the Roman Emperors. Pure in morals, even to austerity, intellectual and scholarly in taste, successful in war, and possessing administrative ability of high order, like that other pagan philosopher-Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, whom he indeed in many respects resembled, Julian commands the respect and esteem of an unbigoted posterity.

Constantius, the father of Julian, was the youngest son of Constantius Chlorus and Theodora. He perished with his eldest son in the Flavian massacre,¹ leaving a son Gallus, by his first wife, Galla, and by his second wife, Basilina, a daughter, who married Constantius II, and a son Julian. The latter was only six years old when his father died, and during the eighteen years following he endured a sort of captivity at the hands of Constantius, to whom the young Flavian, at an early period in life, became an object of both suspicion and fear. But the Empress Eusebia, who fully appreciated his talents and worth, never ceased to intercede for him with Constantius, who was finally persuaded by the Empress to install his cousin in the Gallic prefecture with the title of Cæsar.² Prior to this event, which occurred in his twenty-fifth year, Julian's life had been devoted to study and meditation; and we find him writing to one of his philosopher friends, "I could have wished to have no other occupation but to converse with you, as heavily laden travellers sing on the road to lighten the weight of their burdens." He tells us that as a boy he "often left his books to follow with devout gaze the triumphal march of the sun, or to contemplate by night the wonders and splendors of the starry sky"; and as a modern writer observes, in the worship of "the divine star," the noblest of idolatries, he recognized the religion of his fathers and in Christianity he grew to hate the re-

¹ *Ante*, page 335. ² *Ante*, page 338.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

ligion of his persecutors. Short and thick-set in person and awkward in manner, it is said that when in answer to the Emperor's summons after the death of Gallus Julian came to Milan,¹ wearing his philosopher's cloak, his strange appearance made him an object of ridicule to the entire Court. This fact not improbably counted for more than the persuasion of the Empress in overcoming the uneasiness and suspicion with which Julian had been regarded by the Emperor. For his own security, however, Constantius might wisely have yielded to his instinctive fears of his cousin. For this uncouth dreamer, whose conception of the duties of an Emperor were embodied in his statement to Themistius, "A king should have the nature of a god," had in him the stuff of which true Cæsars are made—requiring only opportunity to disclose the fires which were burning beneath his indifferent exterior.

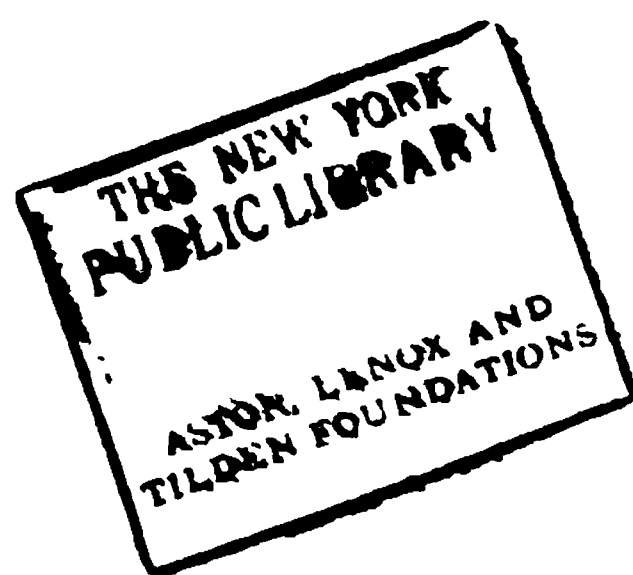
After several months' arduous study of the science of war, the young lieutenant exchanged his philosopher's cloak for the harness, and in a series of most brilliant campaigns,² in which he never met a reverse, he completely freed Gaul from the barbarians and demonstrated himself as consummate a general as he afterwards proved a statesman in the speedy reëstablishment of public order which he effected.

After the death of Constantius, Julian, who had already been invested with the purple by the Gallic army, was decreed the imperial honors by the Roman Senate, and

¹ Constantius had resided there since the death of Magnentius.

² These campaigns extended over a period of five years, and during the enforced idleness of the winter months, the young general led the life of an ascetic philosopher in his Palace of the Thermes at Lutetia (Paris), the remains of which are still to be seen on the Boulevard St. Michel, passing his time in study and the administration of public affairs.

AURELIAN



REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

every one who believed in the old gods took heart of grace to believe that the ancient religion was to be reëstablished. The Emperor had received Christian teaching during his boyhood, and until his twentieth year was supposed to have accepted the new religion. But at heart he seems to have always cherished the gods of his forefathers, and during a residence in Achaia—to which he had once been banished by Constantius—his dreamy and superstitious nature finally capitulated to the allurements of the old Greek religion; so that he returned to Italy despising Christianity more than ever. The reëstablishment of the ancient cult became to him a sacred cause. But in the main he sought rather to accomplish it under the wise policy of the Edict of Milan¹ than by the intolerant methods of some of his pagan predecessors. And while some persecutions undoubtedly occurred as soon as it became evident that the Christians were no longer to receive the special protection hitherto accorded them, it is certain that the Emperor neither abetted nor approved any such acts of violence. His order compelling the Christian churches to restore all the property that had been pillaged from the pagan temples was founded upon the simplest principles of justice; although to despoil the churches for any reason was perhaps not unnaturally considered an utter sacrilege by the Christians. On the other hand, the Emperor's decree forbidding Christians to hold public office and expelling their instructors from the public schools was a manifest iniquity and in strange contrast with his general religious policy, in regard to which the worst to be said is that throughout his reign the indulgence of the government was towards the pagans and its severity towards the Christians. And "the great Apostate" (as with a degree of injustice he has

¹ *Ante*, page 330.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

been generally termed¹) seems at least to have been invariably animated by a genuine humanity in his heroic effort—the most important fact of his reign—to restore the gods he adored with such ardent piety, and revive the superstitious practices which were a part of his religion.

During the first six months of his reign Julian remained at Constantinople; and then assured that the tranquillity which obtained throughout the Empire² would not be affected by his temporary absence, he concluded that the time was opportune for a decisive victory over Rome's perennial foe in the East, and set out for Antioch to prepare for an expedition against the Persians. In the spring of 353 he left Antioch with the largest force that ever invaded the East, and, dividing his troops into two armies, despatched one contingent under his kinsman and favorite general Procopius, who was expected to pass through Upper Mesopotamia and operate on the left bank of the Tigris towards the south. Julian himself with the main body sailed down the Euphrates and crossed over to Ctesiphon. Failing to capture this time-honored bulwark of the sun-god's domain, the Emperor turned aside and rashly advanced into the burning deserts to the north, in hope of effecting a junction with his other division. But the old prophecy³ had not yet spent its force. In repulsing an attack in force, Julian, who had carelessly exposed himself without a breastplate, was struck by a random spear, which bore him to the ground. He made a gallant attempt to re-

¹ The assertion of St. Cyril that Julian had been baptized by Eusebius, Bishop of Nikomedeia, who had directed his early studies, is considered extremely improbable—it being customary at the time to receive baptism very late in life.

² "While this great monarch reigned," says the historian of the period, "not a barbarian crossed the frontier."

³ See *Carus, ante*, page 306.

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GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE SECOND FLAVIAN HOUSE

CRISPUS, BROTHER OF THE EMPEROR CLAUDIUS II

Claudia, wife of Eutropius

CONSTANTINUS CHLORUS married 1. HELENA, ancestress of the elder branch; 2. THEODORA, ancestress of the younger branch

ELDER BRANCH

CONSTANTINUS CHLORUS and HELENA

YOUNGER BRANCH

CONSTANTINUS CHLORUS and THEODORA

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT married 1. MINERVA; 2. FAUSTA

CRISPUS, killed in 326

1. CONSTANTINE II killed in 340 2. CONSTANTINUS II died 361, leaving a daughter who married Emperor GRATIAN 3. CONSTANTINUS killed in 360

4. 5. 6. Three daughters, of whom CONSTANTINA married * HANNIBALIANUS, then GALLUS, and HELENA married Emp. JULIAN

1. CONSTANTINE killed in 337 2. D. FLAVIUS HANNIBALIANUS

3. CONSTANTINUS killed in 337 married

4. CONSTANTINA, married Emp. LICINIUS. Her son killed by CONSTANTINE I

5. ANASTASIA married CÆSAR BASILIANUS, killed by CONSTANTINE I

6. EUTROPIA, married NEPOTIANUS FLAVIUS POPILIUS NEPOTIANUS killed in 360

1. DAL. FL. JULIUS killed in 337 * HANNIBALIANUS king of Pontus killed in 337

1. GALLA; 2. BASILINA

1. A son, killed in 337 2. GALLUS, son of GALLA; killed 354 3. A daughter 4. JULIAN, son of BASILINA, Emp. 361

From Dureau's Hist. of Rome.

REVIVAL OF SPLENDOR

enter the fight—even attempting to pull out the spear with his own hands—but the effort was beyond his strength. He was borne to his tent, and after an affecting leave-taking with his generals and friends, to whom he reaffirmed his confidence in an immortal life in heaven and among the stars, he quietly passed away, in the twentieth month of his reign and the thirty-second year of his age. With him disappeared the last expiring gleams of that imperial splendor which, checked in its decline by the second Claudius, and revived by his immediate successors, had been again steadily diminishing since the reign of Diocletian. Paganism had fought its last battle; the final triumph of Christianity, as a State religion, had come at last; and the disjointed evidences of a past imperial grandeur were soon to disappear forever beneath the great waves of barbaric invasion, already rolling up against the horizon.

The dying Emperor had expressed the wish to be buried in a city where the old gods still reigned supreme; and in the city of Tarsus, far from the sepulchre of his two Christian predecessors, the body of Rome's last pagan Emperor was tenderly laid at rest by his friend Procopius. It was declared by a Christian Bishop of the day that "the earth shuddered at contact with the Apostate's body, and cast out the sacrilegious dust"; while Procopius engraved this epitaph upon his tomb: "Here lies Julian, killed beyond the Tigris, a good Emperor, a brave soldier"—in which simple eulogium at least all fair-minded men must concur.¹

¹ The Emperor Julian was a prolific writer. Many of his works are lost—destroyed it is supposed by the Christians—including his *History of the Gallic War* and the *Refutation of the Gospels*. But in his satirical drama of *The Cæsars*—which Gibbon pronounces one of the most agreeable and instructive productions of ancient wit—and in some of his Letters and Orations, we find evidences of more than ordinary literary taste and ability.

CHAPTER IV

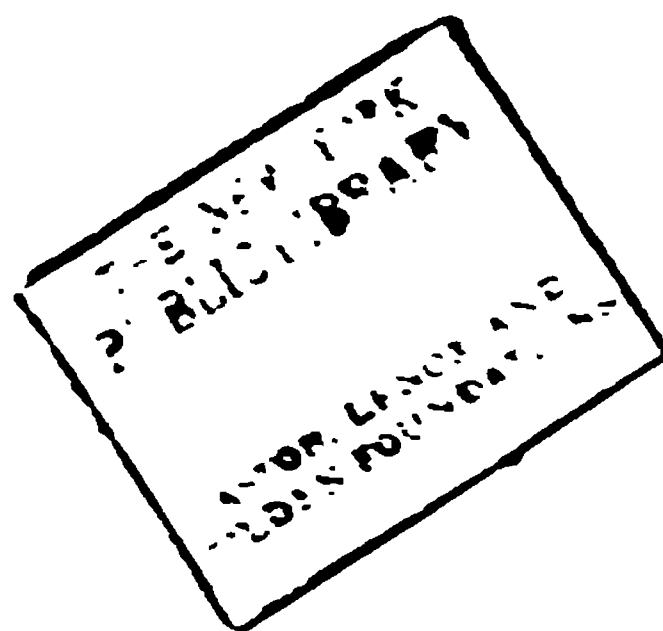
THE FINAL DECLINE

FROM JOVIAN TO ROMULUS AUGUSTULUS: 363-476 A. D.

JOVIAN: 363-364 A. D. The death of Julian, which was hailed with extravagant joy by the Christians, was the signal of disasters to the army in the East, which soon found itself in sore straits. On the day after the Emperor's death a grave council was held in the camp. The friends of Procopius, the general in command of the northern contingent of the imperial army, who was believed to have been Julian's choice as his successor, urged that the selection of a leader should be postponed until the two forces were united. The proposal was, however, rejected by the majority, and the purple first tendered to Sallust, the prætorian prefect, who declined the honor on the score of advanced age. The choice then fell upon the chief officer of the guards, a young man named Jovian, who was extremely popular in the ranks, from which, under the influence of his father, who was an officer of the imperial household, he had risen to the highest grades without losing the democratic qualities which had endeared him to his humbler associates. Like all of his predecessors since the second Claudius, Jovian was a native of Pannonia, and although deficient in character as well as talent, to none more than the Christians was he *persona grata* as candidate for the purple—doubtless because of the significant fact that immediately after his election he made a public confession of Christianity.

The imperial convert, however, had no scruples against obeying the voice of superstition when in the entrails of

RUINS OF THE FORUM ROMANUM
LOOKING FROM THE ARCH OF TITUS TOWARDS THE ROSTRA AND THE CAPITOL



THE FINAL DECLINE

the sacrifice the priests of the army discovered that the gods counselled an immediate retreat from Persia; and in the greatest disorder the army prepared to recross the Tigris. But at a critical moment Sapor, informed by a deserter of the disorganization which followed Julian's death, appeared upon the scene with an "offer of peace"—which was practically a demand for the capitulation of the Roman army. A leader of ordinary courage and ability might safely have scorned such an overture, but the cowardly and pleasure-seeking Jovian, whose only desire was to reach Constantinople and there indulge his profligate propensities, did not hesitate to accept the shameful conditions imposed. As a result Rome lost all the advantages gained by Diocletian in his memorable campaign in 297, including the five provinces on the right bank of the Tigris and ultimately the Armenian alliance, that kingdom being speedily overthrown by the triumphant Persians. Thus the limits of the Empire began to contract—not, as in the case of Aurelian's abandonment of Dacia, from a deliberate act of policy, but because of the timid and unnecessary concession of a weak and incompetent boy, who cared more for a good dinner than for the glory and safety of an Empire.

Early in October Jovian reentered Antioch with the disheartened and humbled fragments of the great army which had marched out so vaingloriously a few short months before. Unable to endure the reproaches and sarcasm of the inhabitants, he hastily resumed his march, and passing through Cappadocia about the middle of February began to approach his imperial city on the Bosphorus, for whose pleasures and excitements his profligate soul had so yearned, but which he was destined never to enjoy. Arriving one night at a little village in Bithynia, he indulged so freely in his favorite vice of gluttony that be-

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

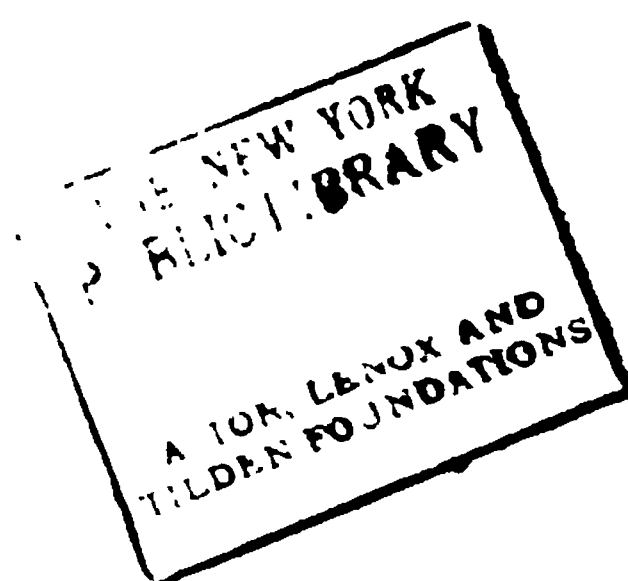
fore morning dawned his feeble and melancholy reign had ended. As one historian laconically observes, "He was a Christian, overate himself, and died."

Proclaimed on the twenty-seventh of June, his death occurred on the sixteenth of February following. At Tigris he had redeemed one day by a pilgrimage to Julian's tomb, for which he ordered some decorations; so that it is not an extravagant summing-up of his character as Emperor to say that he had reigned just seven months and eighteen days too long.

VALENTINIAN I AND VALENS: 364–378 A. D. After the death of Jovian the army marched to Nicæa, where the question of a successor was debated. The aged Sallust again declined the honor of an election, and it was only after the discussion had been prolonged ten days that an agreement was reached in the selection of Valentinian, the tribune of the second company of the imperial guards. The new Emperor was in his forty-third year, a bold and skilful soldier and in high credit with the Christians—it having been related of him that during the reign of Julian he had openly declared his contempt for the ancient religion and refused, under threat of exile, to sacrifice to the old gods.

Valentinian was born in Pannonia, that perpetual battleground of the Empire which had produced so many of his warlike predecessors—unlike most of whom, however, the successor of Jovian had acquired some education in letters while mastering the art of war. A stern lover of discipline, his irascible temper frequently led him to impose the severest penalties for trifling negligences; and his harshness in this respect soon degenerated into absolute cruelty. Thus a boy, who, having been bitten by a hunting dog of which he was in charge, allowed the animal to escape, was whipped

PROBUS



THE FINAL DECLINE

to death; a circus charioteer guilty of a slight breach of the rules perished at the stake; a provincial governor having ventured to request an exchange in the line of preferment, Valentinian brutally ordered that "his head be changed instead." And it is related under what must be considered sufficient corroboration, that in a cage near his bed-chamber the Emperor kept two bears which were fed upon the living bodies of condemned criminals; one of these grim executioners named "Innocence,"¹ as a reward for her services, being at last set free and allowed to range the forests under an imperial decree of protection.

In view of the tales of imperial cruelty and murder with which the histories of his reign fairly bristle, posterity is compelled to withhold much of that profound respect which the religious policy of Valentinian commands. Constantine and Jovian, the great champions of Christianity and paganism, had each declared in favor of toleration. But Constantine, nominally unbiassed, was by turns severe and gracious to pagans and Christians, as policy demanded; while Julian, intensely pagan, was not broad enough to establish and maintain an absolutely equal bill of rights for both parties. It remained for "the bloodthirsty Valentinian" to both decree and compel the actual observance of a genuine religious liberty. Pagan and Christian were alike protected in their religious rights and observances, the scales being so evenly held that neither party might fairly claim imperial partiality. And this Emperor, who delighted in the spectacle of living criminals torn to pieces by a caged bear, seems actually to have based his religious policy upon the broad foundations which had been outlined in the remarkable defence of toleration which had been addressed to Jovian by the orator Themistius: "God, who

¹ The name of the other was "Golden Camel"!

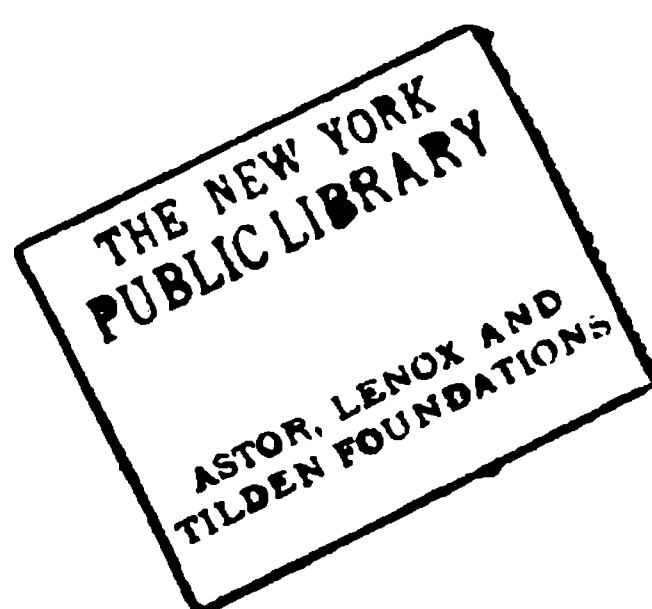
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

has put the religious sentiment in the hearts of men, is willing to be worshipped in the way which each man prefers. The right of going to him as a man pleases, cannot be destroyed by confiscations, tortures, or death. From the lacerated body the soul escapes and carries with it a free conscience."

The death of Julian had been the signal for war throughout the whole Roman world, and within a year following the assaults upon the Empire had become so terrible that, as Marcellinus observes, "it seemed as if the Furies were throwing everything into confusion." In October, 365, the necessity of a vigorous defence of his frontiers called the Emperor from Milan to Gaul, where he was fated to pass the ensuing ten years, sword in hand. At the end of that time, having secured the left bank of the Rhine by a chain of strong fortifications, he determined to establish a similar line of defence along the Danube. To prepare the way for this work, Valentinian crossed the river and engaged in an expedition against one of the border nations, in the course of which he destroyed many villages, all of whose inhabitants—men, women, and children—were put to the sword. But in the very passions which prompted this merciless extermination, the murdered Quadi speedily found an avenger. During his interview with a delegation which came begging for peace, Valentinian gave way to such a violent fit of rage that he ruptured a blood-vessel and expired within a few hours. He was in his fifty-fifth year, and had nearly completed the twelfth of his reign.

Valentinian was twice married. Five years after he became Emperor he repudiated his first wife, Valeria Severa, in order to marry the Arian Justina. Both Empresses survived him, and each of their respective sons, Gratian and Valentinian, lived to wear the purple.

ZENOBIA



THE FINAL DECLINE

At the time of his election Valentinian had been urged to associate some fitting person with himself in the defence of the Empire. The spokesman of the army had significantly remarked, "O Excellent Emperor, if you love your kindred, you have a brother; if you love the State, then seek the fittest man." The Emperor gravely promised to reflect, but almost immediately proclaimed his brother Gratian Augustus, with authority over the Eastern provinces. Three months later the brothers separated forever; Valentinian remaining at Milan, Valens proceeding to Constantinople. This proved to be the final and irrevocable division of the Empire, thereafter united only during the brief interval (following the death of Valentinian II) in which Theodosius, the Emperor of the East, remained at Milan. The death of the latter has, however, been so generally regarded as the period when the Empire actually split in two, that both Theodosius and his predecessor may not improperly be counted among the Emperors of the West.

Valens was six years younger than his brother, whom he seems to have resembled only in the cruelty of his disposition. Small in stature, repulsive in countenance, rude, indolent, avaricious, and of a cowardly nature, it is a matter for wonder that neither of the rebellions against him was successful. Procopius—the friend and trusted lieutenant of Julian—did make some headway in his resistance, and for a time actually pretended to exercise imperial functions; but in the end his generals deserted and traitorously surrendered their leader to the vindictive young tyrant, by whom he was put to death and his head despatched to Valentinian, as a gory emblem of his brother's triumph. All of the friends of Procopius also suffered a cruel death at the Emperor's hands. Theodorus, another competitor,

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

met a similar fate, while a great number of the *honorati* perished in “a promiscuous execution of the innocent and the guilty,” to which Valens was prompted as well by rage as by his anxious suspicions. His reign was a time of brutality and bloodshed, but he “was a Christian,” which presumably reconciled the people to all the rest.

In the year 376 the great Gothic nation which ruled the north country from the Don to Transylvania found itself hard pressed by a new and savage people called Huns¹; and after one great division of the Goths had been overcome,² the other despairingly appealed to Valens for leave to cross the Danube and settle in the waste lands of Thrace. The Emperor weakly consented, and in a short time between one and two hundred thousand fighting men with their wives and children—perhaps a million souls in all—had crossed the frontiers and established themselves in the Roman provinces. The result was precisely what might have been foreseen. Disputes arose between the fair-haired, blue-eyed warriors of the north and the swarthy inhabitants who found themselves gradually pushed backwards by the hungry newcomers. Soon a battle was fought in which the Romans were badly beaten; whereupon the greedy barbarians, tempted by the prospect of rich booty, quickly overran the entire country which is now Turkey in Europe.

Despatching an urgent appeal for aid to his nephew Gratian, who had succeeded Valentinian, Valens assembled an army and set out for Adrianople, which the Goths were menacing. Gratian sent word that he was tempora-

¹ The Huns were a nomad people of Asia, and belonged to the great Mongolian race.

² The Gothic nation was divided into the Ostrogoths, or “Steppe Dwellers,” in the east, and the Visigoths, or “Dwellers in the Woods,” on the west. The former bore the brunt of the Hun invasion from the northeast.

THE FINAL DECLINE

rily detained by illness at Sirmium and begged Valens to await his arrival, when by their combined forces the barbarians might be completely destroyed. Ambitious to secure all the glory, Valens foolishly resolved to proceed alone and force a battle at once. On the ninth of August he attacked the Goths about twelve miles from Adrianople, and after a series of misfortunes on the part of the imperial forces, the latter were utterly routed. In actual losses incurred, as well as in the fatal consequences, the defeat was the most disastrous which had befallen any Roman army since Hannibal won the battle of Cannæ in the Second Punic War.¹ Almost all of its generals, thirty-six tribunes, and two-thirds of the Roman army² are said to have perished. Valens, wounded by an arrow while attempting to escape, took refuge in a neighboring cottage. A band of the enemy speedily attacked the building, and repulsed by a few archers who had accompanied the wounded Emperor, set fire to the structure, all of whose inmates perished in the flames. Valens was forty-eight years old and had reigned fourteen years.

GRATIAN—MAXIMUS—VALENTINIAN II: 378–392 A. D. In the year 367 the Emperor Valentinian, during a severe illness, had conferred upon Gratian, the son of his first wife, Severa, the title of Augustus.³ Gratian was then only eight years of age; so that upon his father's death the pur-

¹ August 2, 216 B. C.

² Valens had from eighty to ninety thousand effective men.

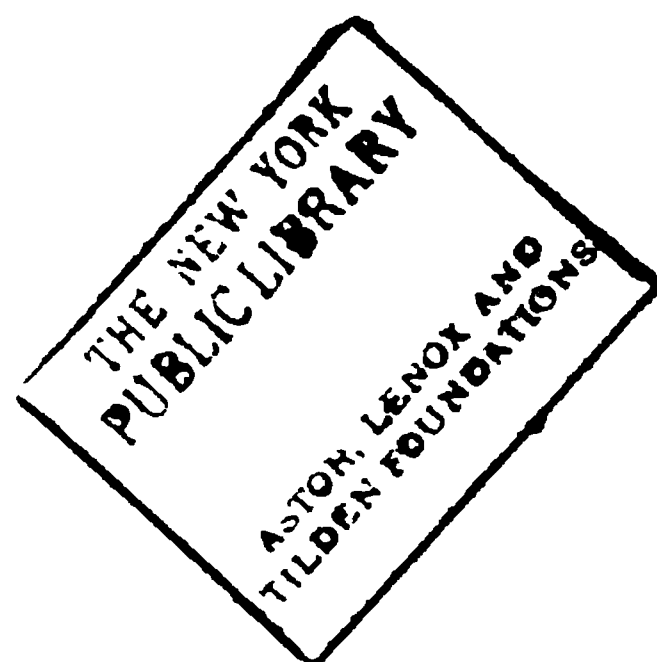
³ Julian was the last "Cæsar." This name, the hereditary cognomen of the Gens Julia, originally belonged to all related on the father's side of that house. From the time that Verus, the adopted son of Hadrian, assumed the name, it designated the heir-apparent, but conferred no special authority. The Cæsars of Diocletian, heirs of the Augusti, were invested with extensive authority; each had his capital city, his army,

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ple descended to a lad of fourteen. The army, however, insisted that the title of Augustus should be given also to Gratian's half-brother, Valentinian, a boy of five, to whom were assigned the provinces of Illyria, Italy, and Africa, as his share of the Empire. Strangely enough, neither jealousy nor rivalry seems to have been at any time manifested by either the boy Emperors or their mothers. Although not consulted in the division of his Empire, Gratian and his friends accepted the result with complacency, the former quietly proceeding to Lutetia (Paris), where he fixed his headquarters, leaving Valentinian and his mother, the Empress Justina, at Milan.

Gratian was of a mild and kindly disposition, but without any strength of character and utterly wanting in tact. He soon lost the affection with which he had first been received by his subjects, who became more than ever estranged when the young man surrounded himself with barbarians, whose customs and dress he even adopted. During the eight years of his reign this son of the vigorous and warlike Valentinian seems to have devoted himself almost entirely to boyish trifling and hunting; and by this inattention to even the artificial duties of sovereignty, he himself prepared the way for a successful revolution. In the year 388 his subjects in Britain rebelled and proclaimed an ambitious young Spaniard named Maximus, who forthwith gathered together such an immense army that its departure was long remembered as "the emigration and his treasury, and exercised executive, judicial, and military functions. Under Constantine the Cæsars were boys designated for the imperial station; under Constantius they were lieutenants with very limited authority; after Julian the title and position ceased to exist. Duruy, *Hist. Rome*, Vol. viii. page 76, note. Gibbon, however, asserts that Valentinian III "was promoted to the rank and dignity of Cæsar" by Theodosius II, Emperor of the East.

CARINUS



THE FINAL DECLINE

tion of a considerable part of the British nation." Gratian made some feeble show of defence, but upon the approach of Maximus the Gallic legions deserted *en masse* and the usurper entered Paris unopposed. Gratian fled to Lyons, whence he might easily have escaped to the East; but he foolishly allowed the governor to detain him with promises of approaching succor until the arrival of Maximus's cavalry, the commander of which immediately put him to death. Gratian had reigned eight years and was twenty-four years of age. His one service to the State had been his appointment of Theodosius to the Eastern Empire, after the death of his uncle Valens in 378.

The marriage of Gratian at an early age to Flavia Constantia, daughter of the Emperor Constantius II, had awakened great hopes that the noble Flavian line might be reëstablished. But no children were born to Constantia, who did not survive her husband. She is believed to have been the St. Constantia of the Church, whose sarcophagus, obtained from the Church of Santa Constantia fuori le mura, may still be seen in the Vatican.

The conqueror of Gratian was a Spaniard by birth, who, although apparently a man of both ability and integrity, had achieved no high position, either civil or military, prior to his investiture by the army. There is reason to believe that the purple was forced upon him against his wishes. In an embassy to Theodosius—the recognized head of the State, Valentinian II being a weak boy of thirteen, in leading-strings to his mother—Maximus denied responsibility for Gratian's death, which he affected to deplore; and proposed that the division of the Western Empire which had been established between Valentinian II and Gratian should be continued under the former and himself as the latter's successor. Theodosius,

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exhausted by his struggle with the Goths, and thus forced to dissemble his resentment, agreed to these proposals and Maximus permanently established himself in Gaul. Here he might have ended his days in peace had he been able to resist that "lust for greater and greater power" which so commonly follows its first taste. At the end of four years, under cover of despatching auxiliaries to aid Valentinian in a Pannonian war, Maximus seized the fortresses of the Alps and unexpectedly appeared before Milan, the boy Emperor and his mother barely escaping before the invaders entered the city.

The Empress Justina, who was a woman of spirit, hastened to Constantinople to beg aid from Theodosius. She had a powerful advocate in her beautiful daughter Galla, of whom the Emperor of the East soon became so enamored that he requested only the favor of an immediate marriage, before setting out to avenge the family of his benefactor. The wedding was accordingly celebrated, and Theodosius prepared with equal promptitude to fulfil his promise. Assembling a great host of Goths, Huns, and other barbarian mercenaries, as auxiliary to his regular troops, he set out for Italy in May, 388, and three months later, after winning two decisive battles from Maximus, crossed the Julian Alps and drove the usurper into Aquileia, whence he was speedily delivered up to the conqueror and by the latter beheaded. His young son was also put to death, while his mother and daughters were condemned to exile. Maximus had ruled five years. His reign is memorable as that of the first Christian ruler who shed heretical blood, under due process of law.

After the overthrow of Maximus, Theodosius reseatd the young Emperor upon the throne of Milan, adding to his original domain all of the Western provinces which had

THE FINAL DECLINE

been held by Maximus. The Emperor of the East, however, himself remained three years in Italy, bending all his energies to the restoration of public order and a reformation of the abuses which had grown up since the death of Valentinian I, although the name of the boy Emperor was invariably written in the public acts. The Empress Justina had died shortly after the restoration; and upon his final departure for Constantinople Theodosius selected a brave Frank named Arbogastes to act as guide and proctor for Valentinian, then seventeen years old. The latter is represented as a most amiable and engaging youth, virtuous, temperate, and industrious. But like his elder brother he had no stability of character, and the ambitious and strong-willed Frank easily and quickly made himself supreme in the State. Boy that he was, the Emperor seems to have realized the situation, and egged on by his courtiers, who were restive under the unchecked power of a barbarian, Valentinian one day handed a rescript to Arbogastes depriving him of his office. The proud Frank coolly tore the paper to fragments with the remark, "My authority does not depend on the smile or frown of a monarch." The young Emperor angrily reached for a sword, but the guards interposed and Arbogastes contemptuously left the room. A few days later the body of Valentinian was found hanging from a tree; and although the fact was strenuously denied by Arbogastes, there seems little doubt that the Emperor was murdered at the instigation of his minister. Valentinian had just become twenty-one and had reigned sixteen years.

THEODOSIUS : 392–395 A. D. The Emperor Theodosius was the son of a skilful general of the same name, who had been one of the most useful lieutenants of the first

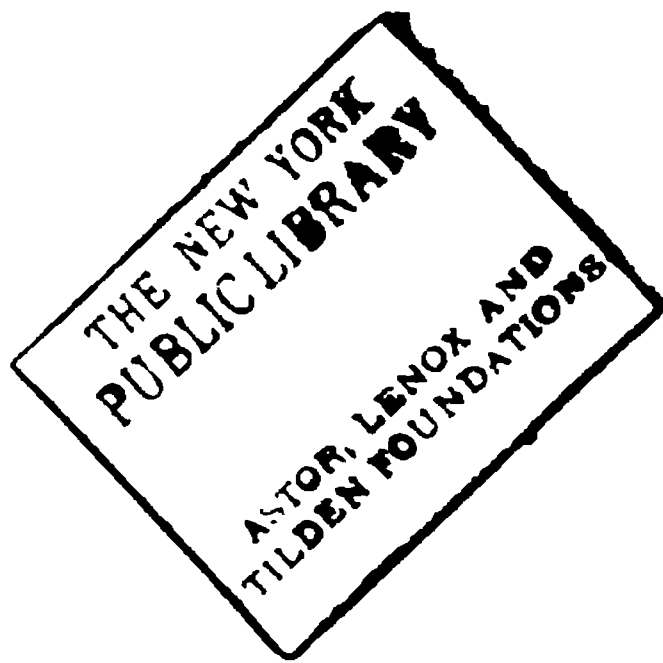
THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

entinian. The son himself rendered valuable services to the same Emperor, from whom he in return received substantial favors; and to the latter's son Gratian he owed his elevation to the throne of Constantinople after the overthrow of Valens. To his credit be it said he never failed in loyalty to the family which had established his fortunes; and this notwithstanding the fact that the elder Theodosius lost his life through the unjust anger of Gratian's mother, after her return to power following the death of Valentinian, who had previously divorced her.

Theodosius was thirty-two years of age when appointed to the Western Empire, and from that time on his life was for the most part intensely active, and in his military efforts at least crowned with invariable success. The last Roman Emperor to whom any measure of greatness may with certainty¹ be accorded, his character was a singular blending of cruelty and kindness, passion and benevolence, liberality and narrowness. The massacre in Thessalonica was scarcely exceeded in brutal cruelty by that of the Alexandrians under Caracalla. The Emperor was himself painfully conscious of his passionate temper, to which rather than any innate vicious tendencies his occasional cruelties are properly ascribed. Apart from these, his implacable hatred of "heretics" and his intolerance of expiring paganism, Theodosius seems to have merited much of the extravagant praises of the "Panegyrics." A good husband and father, a good friend, and on the whole a good ruler, it may be conceded that he really aimed to be "a faithful guardian of the happiness and dignity of the Roman people." The author of the "Decline and Fall" declares that Theodosius has deserved the singular commendation "that his virtues always seemed to expand with his

¹ See *Majorian, post*, page 370.

DIOCLETIAN



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fortune; the season of his prosperity was that of his moderation; and his clemency appeared the most conspicuous after the danger and success of a civil war." In such an eulogy are many of the elements of true greatness.

During the first year of his reign Theodosius was overtaken by a serious illness, and in the expectation of death he accepted baptism in the Orthodox Church. His recovery to health was signalized by some particularly intolerant decrees against heretics—one of his laws even declaring that "whoever by ignorance or negligence offends against the divine law commits sacrilege"; with the penalty of death at the stake, in the arena, or on the cross. But these edicts were as nothing compared with his rescripts against the pagans. Under successive decrees, the privileges of the priests were abolished, the instruments of idolatry were seized and destroyed, the temples were closed, and the consecrated property was confiscated for the benefit of the State or the Church or the army; while the sacred edifices themselves, although not officially condemned to destruction, gradually disappeared under the zeal of the Christian reformers and the fury of the monks, which the Emperor did nothing to check.¹ And as a last and final blow to the ancient religion, the use of sacrifices and the practice of divination by the entrails of the victim were declared to be both infamous and a crime against the State, punishable by death. Under this master stroke, superstition, wounded in its most vital part, succumbed so rapidly that, as we are told, "only twenty-eight years after the death of Theodosius the faint and minute vestiges of paganism were no longer visible to the eye of the legislator." This absolute destruction of the pagan religion (said to be the

¹ In this blind fanaticism many priceless works of art and literature were lost to the world forever.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

only instance of the total extirpation of any ancient and popular superstition) was the most memorable event in the life of Theodosius.

After the death of the second Valentinian,¹ Arbogastes, who had vainly endeavored to convince the world that his imperial master had committed suicide, deemed it prudent to perpetuate his power under cover of another name, and accordingly designated for the purple his former private secretary Eugenius. The latter was a man of obscure origin, who had at one time been a teacher of rhetoric; evidently endowed with both ability and character and possessed of enough common sense to accept his unexpected honors with extreme reluctance. The army interposed no objection to the wishes of Arbogastes, but the Emperor Theodosius refused to accept Eugenius as a colleague (incited perhaps by Galla, who implored him to again² avenge a murdered brother) and prepared for another expedition to Italy. Arbogastes was, however, recognized as a formidable adversary, and it was quite two years before Theodosius succeeded in organizing an army with which he felt willing to hazard his fortunes. Arbogastes had not been idle in the meantime, and when the opposing forces finally came together near Aquileia in September, 395, the result of the first day's combat was so doubtful that the generals of Theodosius urged him to retire. The Emperor stubbornly refused, and on the following day, after a most desperate struggle, achieved a complete victory. As in the case of Maximus,³ the usurper Eugenius was delivered up to Theodosius by his own soldiers, and while in the very act of begging forgiveness upon bended knees his head

¹ *Ante*, page 355.

² The murderer of her brother, Gratian, had been overthrown by Theodosius at her instigation. *Ante*, page 354. ³ *Ante*, page 354.

THE FINAL DECLINE

was stricken off by order of the conqueror. Two days later Arbogastes, a fugitive in the mountains, committed suicide. His pretence of power had lasted two years. The Emperor himself survived his victory scarcely five months. He died at Milan in January, 395, having lived forty-nine years and reigned sixteen. His death marked the final separation of the Empire.

Theodosius was twice married. By his first wife, Ælia Flaccilla, he had two sons, Arcadius, who succeeded him as Emperor of the East, and Honorius, who received the Western Empire. His second wife, Galla, the sister of the Emperor Gratian and Valentinian II, died in childbed leaving an only daughter, Placidia, who lived to play a singular and eventful part in the future history of the State.

HONORIUS: 395–423 A. D. The younger son of Theodosius was only ten years old when he became Emperor. His authority, under what promised to be the final and permanent division of the Empire, extended over Italy, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and half of the Illyrian provinces, the remainder falling to Arcadius, then eighteen years of age. The sons of Theodosius were accepted eagerly by their respective subjects in old and new Rome, and thereafter each of the brothers pursued his feeble and meaningless course without in the slightest concerning himself about the other.

Honorius proved in every respect a most degenerate son of his forceful and vigorous father. Ignorant, effeminate, utterly devoid of ambition, and apparently a stranger even to every sort of passion, the chief amusement, if not actually the sole occupation of his life, seems to have been the feeding of poultry. With the death of Theodosius the genius of Rome may indeed be said to have perished.

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The partiality of a father which led to the designation of this unworthy successor to Theodosius did not blind that Emperor to the necessity of providing an efficient guardian to direct the State at least during the immaturity of his son; and with his usual penetration he selected for that purpose a brave and energetic soldier named Stilicho, who had married the Emperor's niece, Serena, their only daughter, Maria, being at the same time betrothed to Honorius. The marriage occurred when the boy Emperor attained the age of fourteen, Maria being two or three years younger. Ten years later this play-marriage was dissolved by the death of Maria, and about the same time Stilicho, who had consistently devoted his great energies and commanding abilities to the defence of the Empire, now engaged in a death-grapple with its countless foes, was murdered through the jealous spite of an unscrupulous minister of Honorius. Stilicho was perhaps the only man who might have prolonged the existence of the State, and his fall gave the signal for such an invasion of wild races that the Roman provinces were reduced to the verge of ruin. Upon news of his death Alaric and his Goths, who had been twice defeated and finally driven out of Italy by the intrepid Stilicho, came rushing back across the Alps and made straight for Rome. After sustaining three separate sieges, the first two of which were terminated by the payment of a heavy tribute to the invaders, through the treachery of some slaves who opened the Salarian gate at midnight, the city was finally taken by Alaric, and for the first time in eight hundred years¹ a foreign army entered the proud city of Romulus; which was speedily given up to plunder and destruction by the ruthless conqueror. It is said that when a terror-stricken courier rushed into the

¹ Rome was burned by the Gauls in the year 390 B.C.

CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS

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THE FINAL DECLINE

presence of the Emperor at Ravenna with the cry, "It is all over with Rome!" Honorius rejoined, "Why, how can that be when I have just this moment fed her?" his thoughts being engrossed with a pet hen which he had named after the now dethroned mistress of the world.

Alaric did not long survive the sack of Rome, but under his half-brother Adolphus, who succeeded him, the Goths overran Italy, to whose sufferings and misery Honorius remained supremely indifferent. In fact, the personality of the Emperor played so small a part in the history of the eventful twenty-eight years of his so-called reign that there remains slight cause for wonder at his escape from a violent death during a period choked with such terrible deeds of bloodshed; a fact which one historian nevertheless pronounces "the most remarkable occurrence of his life!" He died finally of dropsy in his fortieth year. During his reign Britain had become independent, Spain also was lost forever, and the terrible Goths had gained a foothold in Italy from which they were to be dislodged only after Rome itself had perished.

JOHN: 423-425 A. D. During the reign of Honorius, Ravenna on the Adriatic had been the nominal seat of the Western Empire; and from that city messengers were at once despatched to announce the Emperor's death to the Court of Constantinople, which was expected to designate a successor. Italy was of course in a state of chaos at the time; and while the Eastern Court was deliberating, the late Emperor's confidential secretary, an unscrupulous character named John, found no difficulty in arrogating to himself the pitiful remnants of imperial power. Fortified by the acquiescence of the Italians and a promise of support from the Huns, the usurper sent an embassy to

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR .

named as the last of the Romans." An enduring alliance between the three might have accomplished much for the State. But Placidia, who was weak and incompetent, could not control her lieutenants, whose mutual jealousies soon led to a personal encounter in which Boniface was killed. Aëtius was exiled for the offence, but within a few years was recalled to defend a threatened invasion by the Huns, under the terrible Attila; and from that time until his death he was the actual master of what remained of the Western Empire.

A historian of the time declares that Aëtius was born to be the salvation of the Roman Republic. He was certainly a man of remarkable vigor and ability, and during the entire seventeen years of his virtual reign substantially protected Italy and Gaul from the barbarians. About the year 450 the *Scourge of God*,¹ after threatening both the Eastern and Western Empires and demanding submission to him as "their master," invaded Gaul with a mighty host. The heroic Aëtius was prepared for him, and at Châlons, in one of the bloodiest battles of antiquity, the Huns were defeated and Attila forced to retire from the Roman provinces.²

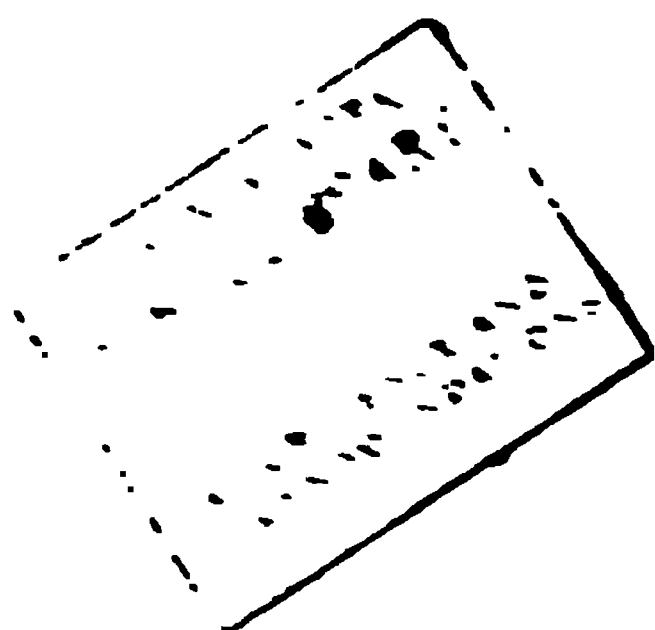
Placidia, who died about the time of Attila's defeat,³ had a daughter named Honoria, who had angered her

¹ Attila had been so named by a pious monk who believed that his ravages were a direct punishment for the awful sins of Rome.

² The number killed in this memorable battle has been variously estimated at from one hundred and sixty thousand to three hundred thousand. Even the lowest number is doubtless an exaggeration—although one historian observes that "whole generations may be thus swept away by the madness of kings in a single hour."

³ She died at Rome November 27, 450, and was buried at Ravenna, where her sepulchre and even her corpse, seated in a chair of cypress wood, were preserved for ages.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT



THE FINAL DECLINE

family by selecting as a lover her chamberlain Eugenius. The princess, who was only sixteen, was first publicly disgraced by her resentful mother and then banished to Constantinople, where she passed ten or more years in irksome seclusion. Despairing of other relief, she at last conceived the remarkable idea of appealing to Attila; and just before the battle of Châlons managed to transmit a letter to him, enclosing a ring as pledge of her love and earnestly entreating him to claim her as his wife. The astonished Hun, nothing loath to include an Emperor's sister in his train, actually made a demand for the princess just before his invasion of Gaul; whereupon her indignant relatives at Constantinople sent the misguided woman back to Rome. There she was compelled to marry an obscure person, as a nominal husband, and immediately afterwards was condemned to perpetual imprisonment—as the historian says “to bewail those crimes and misfortunes which Honoria might have escaped had she not been born the daughter of an Emperor.”

After his defeat by Aëtius, Attila renewed his demand for Honoria, and being again refused at once invaded Italy, laid siege to Aquileia, which he destroyed so completely that after fifty years its site even could not be found, and marched on Rome. Valentinian, wild with fright, at once despatched Pope Leo to promise that Honoria should be given up. The savage destroyer, of whom it was said that the grass never grew on a spot where his horse had trod, agreed to stay his conquest until the condition of its entire abandonment should be fulfilled by Honoria's release. In the meantime he consoled himself by marrying a beautiful girl named Hilda; and in a debauch incident to the nuptial ceremonies his wild barbarian life went out—leaving one weeping woman by his bedside and another in the

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

Roman prison from which she was now destined never to escape.

The death of Attila, which might be thought to have marked Rome's salvation, was actually the signal for its final downfall. The miserable Emperor, who had cringed to Aëtius while the formidable invader was alive, now decided that he could rule alone, and "the last Roman" was openly murdered by Valentinian himself, supported by his guards. As one of his courtiers had the courage to tell him, the imperial assassin had acted "like a man who cuts off his right hand with his left." He himself did not long survive the outrage. Incensed by a most shameful crime which Valentinian had committed against his domestic happiness, a wealthy senator named Petronius Maximus determined to rid the State of its degenerate head. He employed for the purpose two servants of the murdered Aëtius, who were easily induced to avenge their master, and while observing some military sports Valentinian was stabbed to death in the very midst of his guards, not one of whom lifted a hand or voice in defence of their despised ruler. Thus perished the last Roman Emperor of the family of Theodosius, in the thirty-sixth year of his age and the thirtieth of his reign.

Valentinian was married at an early age to his cousin Eudoxia, daughter of Theodosius II, Emperor of the East, and the beautiful and celebrated Athenais.¹ She bore him two daughters named Placidia and Eudoxia, and lived to destroy her husband's murderer, although she herself perished in the catastrophe.²

¹ Athenais was the daughter of an Athenian philosopher named Leontius. Before her marriage to Theodosius she renounced paganism and was baptized with the Christian name of Eudoxia, which had been that of her husband's mother. ² *Post*, page 368.

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PETRONIUS MAXIMUS: 455 A. D. In the assassination of the Emperor, Maximus was doubtless actuated as much by ambition as revenge. Possessed of ability, wealth, and rank—he had been twice consul and thrice prætorian prefect of Italy—his vanity was easily stirred by the plaudits of a large following of clients, who were prepared to salute him as Emperor as soon as the royal house of Theodosius should be extinct; and over the bleeding corpse of his victim Maximus was unanimously proclaimed by Senate and people. His short reign of three months, full of misery for himself and for the family of the unfortunate Valentinian, ended in a terrible disaster which he indirectly brought down upon Rome.

Upon the death of his wife, who did not long survive his elevation to the purple, Maximus at once compelled the widowed Empress Eudoxia to marry him, her eldest daughter Eudoxia being at the same time married to the Emperor's son Paladius. Having thus, as he supposed, established the hereditary succession of his family and at the same time humiliated that of his enemy, the revenge of Maximus appeared complete. But in this hour of his apparent triumph, all was imaginary, as it proved. Gnawed by remorse and a prey to terror, the Emperor mourned his lost happiness, exclaiming to a friend, "O fortunate Damocles, thy reign began and ended with the same dinner."

The proud Eudoxia, whose mourning, whether real or apparent, had been so shamefully outraged, determined herself to play a hand in the game of revenge. Unable to secure assistance from her family, whose power had been destroyed, she made secret overtures to Genseric, King of the Vandals. Assured that neither the soldiers—with whom Maximus was unpopular—nor the confederate barbarians

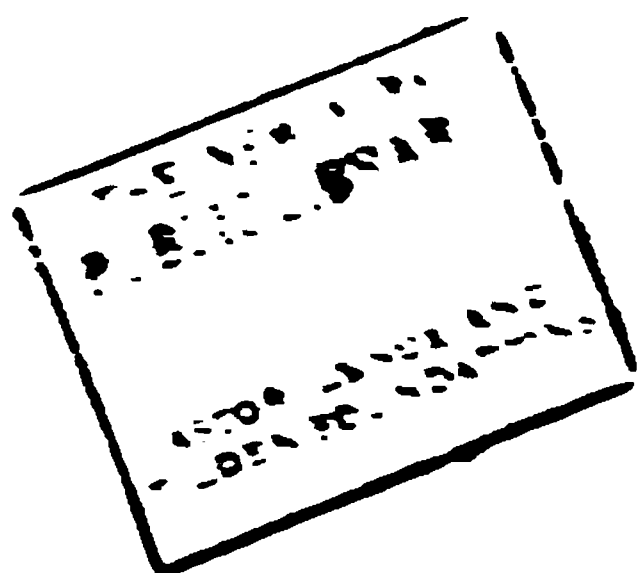
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would oppose, the African monarch landed a powerful force at the mouth of the Tiber and summoned Rome to surrender. Maximus attempted to escape, but in his flight through the streets he was assaulted by the frenzied populace and stoned to death, his mangled body being cast into the Tiber. Three days later Genseric entered the defenceless city, which during fourteen days was given over to pillage and rapine by the Moors and Vandals. When the barbarians finally set sail again, they took with them nearly all that had thus far been left of the splendor and magnificence of public and private wealth; including the wonderful bronze roof of the Capitol,¹ and the holy instruments of Jewish worship which four centuries earlier had been brought by Titus from Jerusalem. Eudoxia herself did not escape the ruin which she had caused. Stripped of her jewels, the twice-widowed Empress, with her two daughters, the only surviving descendants of the great Theodosius, was dragged an unhappy captive to Carthage. Six years later, soon after the death of the Emperor Majorian, Eudoxia and her youngest daughter, Placidia, were restored by Genseric, who, however, retained the eldest daughter as the wife, or rather captive, of his son, Hunneric. Placidia afterwards married the Emperor Olybrius, through which connection the family of Theodosius was propagated in the female line as far as the eighth generation.²

AVITUS: 455—457 A. D. After the death of Aëtius, whose vigor and military fame had kept the foes of the Empire in check, the barbarians soon became restless, and when Valentinian followed his great general to the grave, the

¹ The external gilding is said to have cost Domitian two million five hundred thousand pounds sterling. The ship which carried these relics was the only one of the fleet to suffer shipwreck. ² Gibbon.

SARCOPHAGUS OF SAINT HELENA



THE FINAL DECLINE

storm broke. Realizing his personal unfitness to cope with the danger, Maximus wisely selected for that purpose a Gallic general named Avitus, who had been one of the ablest lieutenants of the murdered Aëtius.

After a lifetime of active employment in the public service, where he had distinguished himself alike in the civil and military branches, Avitus had withdrawn to a beautiful estate near Clermont, having determined to devote his remaining years to literature and the simple pleasures of rural life. But at the threshold of this peaceful existence he was overtaken by the messengers who bore the imperial rescript creating him prætorian prefect of Gaul. Unable to resist the temptation of an ambitious future, he immediately assumed the military command, and after quelling the disturbance in Gaul proceeded to Toulouse, where he effected a solid alliance with Theodoric, King of the Goths. About this time news of the death of Maximus reached Gaul, and the provincials and barbarians, with whom Avitus had always been popular, at once proclaimed him Emperor. The consent of the Emperor of the East was readily obtained; but Rome and Italy, to which the Western Empire was now practically reduced, although formally assenting, were ill-pleased with the idea of being governed by the so-called "Gallic usurper."

In the hope of overcoming the hostility of the Romans, the new Emperor decided to fix his residence in the old capital, and announced his intention of accepting the consulship for the ensuing year. But in Rome loyalty to the sovereign had long been a dead idea. Scorned and disliked as a "foreigner," Avitus speedily became an object of genuine hatred to the Romans; and supported by Count Ricimer, the principal military commander in Italy, the Senate, disclosing a last glimmering spark in its bed of ashes, de-

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manded its right, founded upon the ancient constitutions, of choosing an Emperor. Separated from his Gothic allies and his provincial supporters, Avitus, after a feeble show of resistance, abdicated the purple, in lieu of which he received from Ricimer the bishopric of Placentia. But the Senate, flushed with victory, decreed otherwise, and Avitus, in his flight towards the Alps in search of sanctuary, was overtaken and put to death. He had reigned about a year.

MAJORIAN: 457–461 A. D. The apparent triumph of the Senate, in the deposition of Avitus, as matter of fact left the State at the complete mercy of the barbarian commander of the Italian troops. Without troubling himself to first advise with the Conscript Fathers, Ricimer placed upon the throne another retired general named Julianus Majorianus. The new Emperor derived his name from his maternal grandfather, who in the reign of Theodosius had commanded the Illyrian troops. His father had been a loyal friend and faithful officer of Aëtius, under whom Majorian received his military education. His rise had been so rapid and his successes so great, that he incurred the enmity of the wife of his patron, jealous for her husband's reputation, which at times was eclipsed by that of the able and intrepid young officer, who was for that reason forced out of the service. Recalled and promoted after the death of Aëtius, at the time of the deposition of Avitus he held the post of master-general of the cavalry and infantry, from which he was elevated to the purple by his friend the King-maker.

The appointment was not only popular in its immediate results, but eminently wise; and for the last time in its history Rome was blessed with an Emperor brave, virtuous, and capable. "The successor of Avitus," says Gibbon, "pre-

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sents the welcome discovery of a great and heroic character, such as sometimes arise in a degenerate age to vindicate the honor of the human species." And while the history of his reign is imperfectly related, enough is known of his public and private actions to convince posterity that there was at least some foundation for the extravagant encomium of the historian Procopius, who declared "that he was gentle to his subjects, terrible to his enemies; and excelled in *every* virtue *all* his predecessors who had reigned over the Romans."

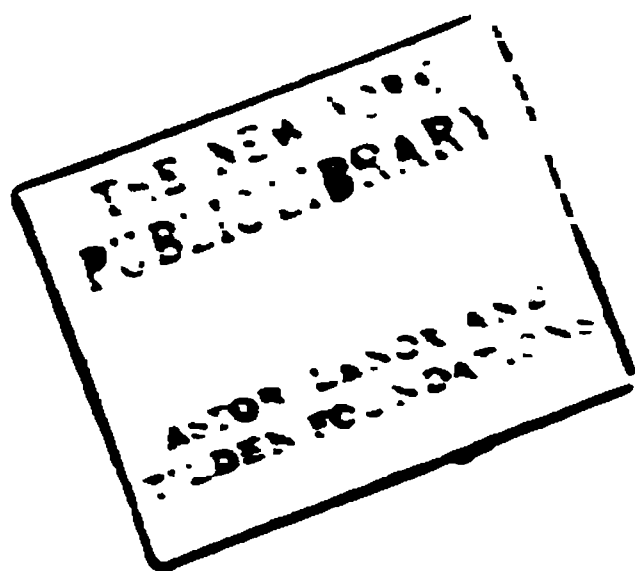
Appreciating, apparently, not only the fact of Rome's decay but as well the causes of its decline, Majorian courageously undertook the task of reform. It is known that he made many admirable laws, that he lightened the burdens of taxation, which had become unbearable, and that he even infused the degenerate Italians with some show of public spirit. At the same time he quelled the disorders in Gaul and displayed such vigor against the marauding Vandals who had long terrorized Rome, that Genseric was forced to promise that he would molest Italy no more. But for Rome, alas! all this was at best only the flickering fires of a long-spent energy. The love and respect which the Emperor inspired and the hold which he was acquiring upon the people at last aroused the jealousy of Ricimer, who was unwilling to be so entirely obscured by the glory of his friend. The King-maker's influence with the army was still supreme, and with the help of his soldiers he speedily mastered the unsuspecting Emperor, whose virtue could not protect him against an unscrupulous ambition at the head of the guards. Majorian was compelled to abdicate, and by his death from poison five days afterwards, the fateful history of his immediate predecessor was repeated. He had reigned four years.

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THE SIX SHADOWS: 461–476 A. D. During the fifteen years which followed the death of Majorian, the ragged outlines of imperial power were rapidly obliterated by an almost uninterrupted series of invasions, revolutions, and frantic social convulsions. No less than six masqueraders in the imperial rôle emerged momentarily from the fast-gathering darkness, and one by one vanished in the flames which were licking up the last fragments of the structure of Augustus. A few brief references may suffice to consign these ghostly shadows to their several graves.

While Ricimer preferred to rule under the personality of another, he determined not to again jeopardize his power by “the imprudent preference of superior virtue and merit.” Disclaiming for himself the title of either King or Emperor, he bestowed the purple upon an obscure individual named Libius Severus, of whose birth and character nothing is known. “It would be useless,” says Gibbon, “to discriminate his nominal reign in the vacant interval of six years between the death of Majorian and the elevation of Anthemius, since during that period the government was in the hands of Ricimer alone.” Severus expired as soon as his life became inconvenient to his patron; which occurred when the latter found himself unable to further withstand rebellion at home and the alarmingly increasing depredations of Genseric and his terrible Vandals. Himself destitute of ships, Ricimer was compelled to appeal for assistance to the Emperor of the East, which was accorded by Leo upon condition that the ancient pretensions of Constantinople to the right of naming the sovereign of the West should be recognized. Ricimer was forced to consent—saving a bit of his pride by demanding and receiving as his wife the daughter of Anthemius, the new Emperor of Rome. The latter was a man of high

JULIAN



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birth and station. His father, Procopius, had obtained the rank of general and patrician, his grandfather was the celebrated prefect who directed affairs during the infancy of the younger Theodosius, while he himself had married the daughter of the Emperor Marcian. His elevation to the purple was universally approved, and the alliance with Ricimer seemed to furnish an enduring promise for the union and happiness of the State. But the King-maker soon tired of both his bride and his subordinate position in affairs. Retiring to Milan, he opened a treasonable correspondence with Anicius Olybrius, an ambitious noble who had married Placidia, the younger daughter of Valentinian III, after she had been restored by Genseric.¹ Olybrius was quite willing to exchange a peaceful residence at Constantinople for the hazards of the Roman people; landing at Ravenna he joined Ricimer and together the conspirators marched on Rome. After a terrible battle² Anthemius was slain, the city was taken and given over to pillage, and Olybrius declared Emperor. The King-maker, however, died in the midst of his triumph, and Olybrius himself followed in less than six months (October, 472 A. D.).

Ricimer had bequeathed the command of his army to his nephew Gundobald, a Burgundian prince; and assuming that his prerogatives included that of nominating a successor to the purple, Gundobald selected for that purpose an obscure soldier named Glycerius. In the meantime the Emperor of the East at the instance of his wife was persuaded to nominate for the Roman purple Julius Nepos, who had married a niece of the Empress. Accom-

¹ *Ante*, page 368.

² It was in this battle that the statues and bronzes which embellished the tomb of Hadrian were thrown down by the Goths, whose ammunition had been exhausted in defence of the bridge of St. Angelo.

THE HOUSE OF CÆSAR

panied by a few troops Nepos came over from the Eastern capital and easily became master of what was left of Rome—including the miserable Glycerius. To the latter Nepos offered the choice between death and a bishopric. Glycerius accepted the see, and, more fortunate than Avitus,¹ lived to enjoy both the dignity and an ultimate revenge.²

The reign of Nepos was short and inglorious. Vainly endeavoring to purchase immunity from barbaric invasion by ceding Auvergne to the Visigoths, within a year from his accession the Emperor fled in dismay from a furious onslaught by the barbarian confederates under Orestes. Escaping to his ships, Nepos crossed the Adriatic and retired to his Dalmatian principality, where five years later he was murdered by Glycerius, who shortly afterwards became the Archbishop of Milan.

After the expulsion of Nepos (475 A. D.) Orestes, with the consent of the army, of which he had been made the master-general by the last Emperor, presented the purple to his son Romulus Augustus—or *Augustulus* (*Little Augustus*), as he was called on account of his youth. The boy Emperor, who was noted for his extreme beauty (and apparently for that alone), took his name from his mother, who was the daughter of Count Romulus of Petovio, in Noricum. The name of *Augustus* was, at this time, a not uncommon surname; and the appellations of the two great founders of the city and of the Empire were thus strangely united in the last of their successors.³

Orestes had now attained the summit of his ambition—

¹ *Ante*, page 370. ² See below.

³ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, Vol. iii. page 513. The author notes a famous and similar case: "The meanest subjects of the Roman Empire assumed the illustrious name of *Patricius*, which, by the conversion of Ireland, has been communicated to a whole nation."

THE FINAL DECLINE

in the same moment at which the Empire reached the last stair in its descent. Scarcely had Romulus been proclaimed before the troops, whose insolence had become unbounded after years of unbridled license, demanded of their general that *one-third* of all the lands in Italy should be divided among them! Orestes sharply refused; whereupon the troops, under a huge warrior named Odoacer, marched against Orestes, besieged him in Pavia, which finally yielded, and the father of Augustulus was put to death. The helpless young Emperor was taken to Rome by the conqueror, who, however, spared the inoffensive youth and dismissed him from the imperial palace with his whole family, to enjoy a pension for life in the castle of Lucullus, in Campania (476 A. D.). Odoacer and his barbarians remained at last the masters of the Palatine. Their royalty was acknowledged by Senate and people; it was decreed by the former that no more Emperors should be chosen, and that the Emperor of the East might take also the title of Emperor of the West, which Rome repudiated forever.

Thus ended the Empire of Rome, in strange coincidence with the prophecy of the early augurs that the twelve vultures which Romulus had seen represented twelve centuries before the downfall of the city would occur.¹ But as a great philosopher has observed, the fall of the Empire was announced "by a clearer omen than the flight of vultures: *the Roman government appeared each day less formidable to its enemies, more odious and oppressive to its subjects.*"

¹ These interpretations of the augurs were current as early as the time of Cicero and Varro. According to the latter the twelfth century would expire 447 A. D.; there was, however, enough uncertainty as to the true era of the city to bring the fact of its overthrow in remarkably close accord with the prophecies.

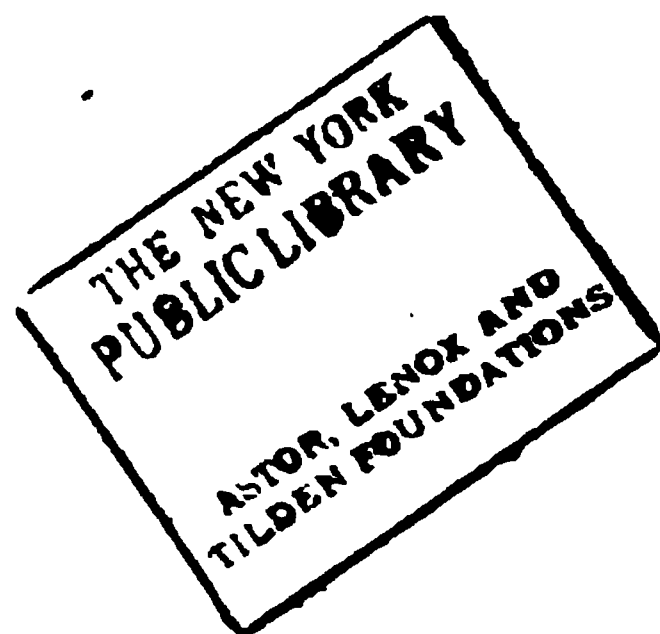
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Freedom, virtue, power, and honor had long been lost. The name of Roman citizenship, which formerly excited the ambition of humanity as the highest guaranty of individual safety and dignity, and of personal rights, had been scorned and abjured as a badge of servility and personal wretchedness. Towards the end nothing remained to indicate that Rome claimed a place among the sovereignties of the world except the bare idea of the imperial office which a few mad actors in the conspiracy for power attempted to keep alive by a bit of purple cloth, a diadem,¹ and title. This last frail thread had snapped at last. A barbarian was firmly established upon the Palatine, as King. The proud title of Augustus had been forsworn. The name of the last Emperor of the West had been written. The might of Cæsar was broken. Rome was dead.

Romulus Augustus and Romulus Augustulus, with their connecting links of Kings, consuls, tyrants, and Emperors, had spanned one of the most tremendous episodes in world history. But what remains to-day of all that mighty power which had enthroned itself so massively upon the Seven Hills of the sacred city? Cemented by the misty traditions of the Age of Fable, by the refulgent glories of the Republic, by the grandeur and magnificence of Augustus, to the successors of the first Julian it may well have appeared forever impregnable. But in the irresistible march of events, and under the relentless hand of time, as in the case of every other human creation, in all ages, decay set in, it crumbled, gave way, its fragments were destroyed, its very dust scattered to the four winds. So that to-day a few impressive ruins, a few discolored and mutilated

¹ The Emperor Aurelian first introduced the Oriental custom of wearing the royal diadem, which was bound upon the forehead.

**RUINS OF THE HOUSE OF THE VESTALS
AND OF THE PALACES OF TIBERIUS AND CALIGULA**



THE FINAL DECLINE

marbles, a handful of corroded coins, alone reward the curious search for material proof of the purple mantle, the curule chair, and the august Emperors of Rome. So true indeed it is

*"The bust outlasts the throne,
The coin, Tiberius."*

THE END

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